

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine \$5.99

PENGUIN EGGS

The Bills

Natalie
Merchant

Fiamma Fumana
Édouard Richard

John Wort Hannam • Mercan Dede
Estelle Klein • Jenny Whiteley • Vakokā
Kevin Breit • Martyn Joseph
Geoff Berner in Romania
Colin Irwin in Canada

Issue No. 23
Autumn
2004



Win k.d. lang's hymns of the 49th parallel — Plus News, Reviews, Charts ...

"Crowe breathes in light jazz, contemporary folk, show tunes, acoustic pop and trad country, then breathes out **her own richly distilled sound**."

—Sandy MacDonald, Halifax Daily News

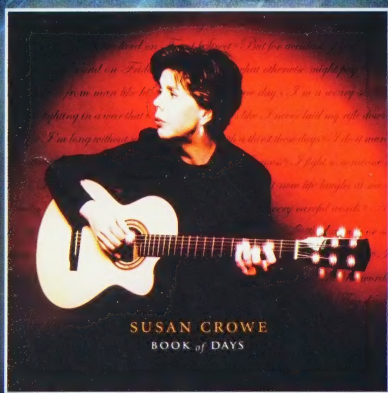
"Crowe...remains one of **our nation's vital singer/songwriters** no matter where she is...like eavesdropping on the internal dialogue of a literate and fundamentally loving witness to this deep vale of friggin' tears."

—John P. McLaughlin, Vancouver Province

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—Montreal Gazette

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Cover story

34...On the cobbled streets of Copenhagen, Strasbourg, Berlin, Milan, Amsterdam...the Bills molded the spirit of the band they are today. There they learned how to entertain. And for beer money. Now one of the premiere acoustic roots acts in North America, the Victoria-based quintet have released their third disc. Let 'Em Run retains all the wonderful hallmarks of their liberating string-band eclecticism. It also marks Chris Frye's maturity as a songwriter

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Cover Photo: Deddeda Stemler

Quotable

"Our bass player had a lot of sex. He put us all to shame. There was some communicable diseases, run-ins with the police fairly regularly, a massage therapist in Berlin who got to know the band intimately - there was a lot of love." - Chris Frye recalls the fledgling Bill Hilly Band's busking tour of Europe

"[Eric Beaudry] brought down all his recording equipment from Joliette [north of Montreal] and set it up in my living-room. I played for 18 hours in all, then he shut the thing off. I asked if he had enough, and he laughed and said, 'Yes, for at least three albums'." - Édouard Richard's first recording session at age sixty-five.

Sheet Music

- 60 . . . Bamfield's John Vanden.
- ...By The Bills' Chris Frye



"Nothing too exceptional hovers from the Friday night concerts, apart from the splendidly eccentric beard, hat, trousers and dancing of Angus Grant of Shooglenifty, who's not a bad fiddle player either." - Colin Irwin

Photo: By Frank Gasparik



31 Colin Irwin in Canada



Photo: By Fumica Szekeli

27 Geoff Berner in Romania



Photo: By Frank Gasparik

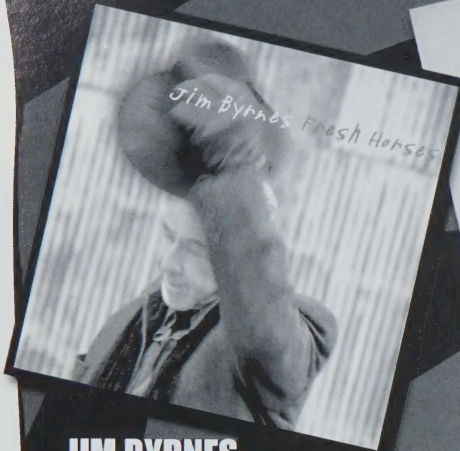
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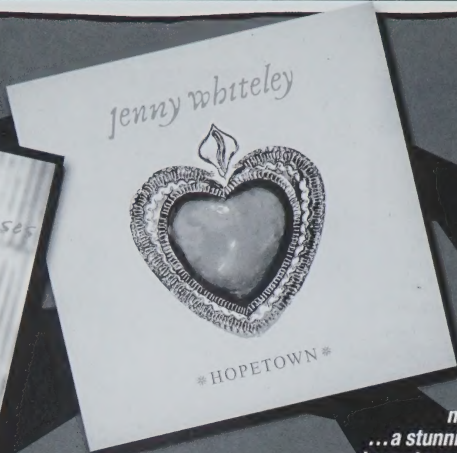
JIM BYRNES Fresh Horses

"We're barely into it but this inspired blues/roots set is sure to go down as a highlight of the year and likely the best thing Jim Byrnes ever released."

★★★★

— The Vancouver Province

Fall tour to be announced soon
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for details



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"On the strength of her soul-stirring vocals and heartfelt lyrics the Juno Award winning singer songwriter has emerged as an amazing talent with something unique to contribute to the folk music tradition in this country. ...a stunning collection of haunting folk and country songs that has "next big thing" written all over it."

— The Echo



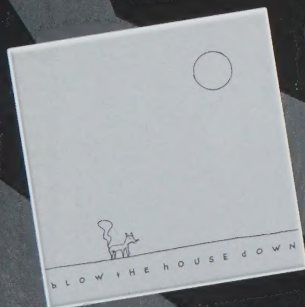
Black Hen congratulates its zesty nominees for the West Coast Music Awards:

**Jim Byrnes "Fresh Horses"
Outstanding Blues Album**

**Great Uncles Of The Revolution "Blow the House Down"
Outstanding Instrumental Album**

**Chris Tarry "Project 33"
Outstanding Jazz Album**

**Steve Dawson
Outstanding Producer
for Jim Byrnes' "Fresh Horses"**



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THE REVOLUTION
Blow The House Down**

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The Sidetrack

Sept 10th - Calgary, AB
The Merlot

Sept 11th - Turner Valley, AB
The Legion

Sept 12th - Nelson, BC
Charlotte's

Sept 13th - Grand Forks, BC
Grand Forks Art Gallery

Sept 15th - Duncan, BC
Duncan Garage Showroom

Sept 16th - Saltspring Island, BC
Anise Restaurant

Sept 17th - Victoria, BC
Logan's

Sept 18th - Vancouver, BC
Media Club (early show - 7pm)

Sept 23-25 - Nashville, TN
The Americana Music Conference

October 16 - Greenbank, ON
The Greenbank Folk Club

October 22 - Toronto, ON
The Silver Dollar Room

**CHRIS TARRY
Project 33**



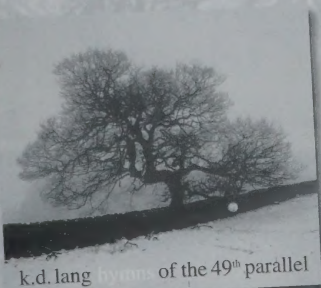
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k.d. lang hymns of the 49th parallel

With *hymns of the 49th parallel*, the Alberta native pays homage to the work of her favourite Canadian-born songwriters: Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Bruce Cockburn, Ron Sexsmith and Jane Siberry.

On this lovingly assembled disc she juxtaposes classics from iconic artists who were her inspirations with equally brilliant material from contemporary performers who remain her fellow travelers.



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CANADA

PENGUINE EGGS

Canada's Folk, Roots
and World Music Magazine

Issue No. 23 Autumn 2004
Issn: 73060205
10942 80 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta
Canada, T6G 0R1

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Campbell, Bruce White and Guy Carson.

Penguin Eggs welcomes news, live reviews, features and photos, but cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material. Please check with the editor prior to submitting any articles or artwork. We publish four times a year: Summer (June), Autumn (September), Winter (December) and Spring (March).

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982. He has never fully recovered and now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records in Europe and Shanachie in North America.

Penguin Eggs is published and printed in Canada with generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts.



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Foundation
for the Arts

COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS



Canada Council
for the Arts

editorial

All right, all together: these are the best of times... these are, indeed, as Charles Dickens once wryly noted, the worst of times. That well-worn observation brilliantly and succinctly sums up the current state of the union on the good planet roots. Rarely has the future looked so blindingly bright with young bands — Nathan, Dyad, The Duhks, The Wailin' Jennys... and so on — making such incredibly stimulating music.

And yet visit any of the major cities around folk festival time and what do the local papers have to say about folk? With one or two notable exceptions: cliché-laden drivel for the most part. Reviews usually come accompanied with a stock photo of a glazed looking hippy tilting at windmills in some mad, solitary dance.

The Vancouver Province actually passed reporting on this summer's festival in its Saturday paper. How sad is that? They did have their hippy photo, though. Bless 'em.

How does the popular press get away with this negative nonsense year in and year out? Because we let them, that's why. I'm sick of being tarred with a brush that first saw the light of day almost forty years ago. It really is time to call them on their negativity. A polite letter to the editor or a courtesy call will suffice. Believe me, nowhere is there more inflated or fragile egos as in a newsroom. A chastened reporter will think twice about putting granola and folk music in the same sentence. Ink-stained... oh, forget it.

As for the festivals themselves? Brilliant for the most part, but still room for improvement. It appears that most artistic directors are trying too hard to create magic on their stages. Workshops are often overlaid with performers, which frequently means relentless, tedious sound-checking and reduced listening time. Spontaneity is just that: it can't be planned. Please stop this nonsense of including two or three bands and a couple of solo slots all on the same stage at the same time.

More than anything else, it's time the festivals woke up to the fact that the kids today love to dance — provide them with a stage exclusively for dancing. The need was desperately evident every time the likes of Shooenignify, Michael Franti or Fiamma Fumana took to the stage. Long, gyrating colourful lines would form down the sides of the anchored lawn chairs. Fabulous fun.

And one last thing: how heartening to see the folk community consistently lash out at the perpetual travesties made in the name of democracy and progress. Some things never change, eh. Thank goodness for that.

— Roddy Campbell

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PENGUIN
EGGS
Autumn
2004

Editorial

sam the record man top 20

Compiled from July sales
at Sam's, 1656 Barrington
Street, Halifax, NS

1. The Cottars
2. Gordon Lightfoot
3. Loretta Lynn
4. Al Tuck & No Action
5. Vinicius Cantuaria
6. The Beaton Family
7. The Irish Descendants
8. Great Big Sea
9. Natalie MacMaster
10. Lhasa
11. Jonathan Richman
12. Old Crow Medicine Show
13. Stan Rogers
14. Amelia Curran
15. Old Man Luedecke

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| On Fire | (Independent) |
| Harmony | (Linus) |
| Van Lear Rose | (Universal) |
| Arhoolie | (Rounder) |
| Horse and Fish | (Boreal/NorthBis) |
| Cape Breton Fiddle . . . Music | (Folkways) |
| We Are | (Warner Bros) |
| Something Beautiful | (Warner Bros) |
| Blueprint | (Rounder) |
| La Llorona | (Audiogramme) |
| Not So Much As To Be Loved . | (Rounder) |
| Old Crow Medicine Show | (Nettwerk) |
| Home In Halifax | (Fogarty's Cove) |
| Lullabies For Barflies | (Rounder) |
| Mole In The Ground | (Independent) |



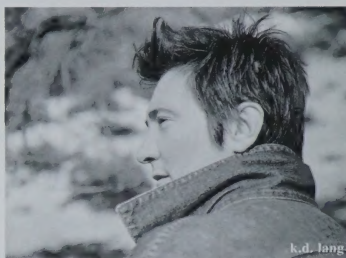
Old Man Luedecke

soundscapes top 10

Compiled from July sales at
Soundscapes, 572 College St.,
Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1B3

1. Feist
2. Wilco
3. The Sadies
4. Kings of Convenience
5. Howie Beck
6. Loretta Lynn
7. k.d. lang
8. Various Artists
9. Iron and Wine
10. Jim White

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Let It Die | (Arts & Crafts) |
| A Ghost Is Born | (Nonsuch) |
| Favourite Colours | (Outside) |
| Riot On An Empty Street | (Astralwerks) |
| Howie Beck | (True North) |
| Van Lear Rose | (Universal) |
| hymns of The 49th Parallel | (Nonsuch) |
| Por Vida | (Sony) |
| Our Endless Numbered Days | (Sub Pop) |
| Drill A Hole In That Substrate . | (V2) |



k.d. lang

megatunes top 10

Compiled from July sales at
Megatunes, 10355 Whyte Ave., Edmonton,
Alberta T2T 0A2

1. k.d. lang
2. Wilco
3. Ruthie Foster
4. Eric Bibb
5. J.J. Cale
6. Patty Griffin
7. Various Artists
8. Natalie Merchant
9. Los Lobos
10. Antibalas

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| hymns of The 49th Parallel | (Nonsuch) |
| A Ghost Is Born | (Nonsuch) |
| Stages | (Blue Corn Music) |
| Friends | (Telarc) |
| To Tulsa and Back | (Sanctuary) |
| Impossible Dream | (Ato) |
| Por Vida | (Or) |
| The House Carpenters Daughter | (Myth America) |
| The Ride | (Marmoth) |
| Who Is This America? | (Artemis) |



Natalie Merchant

ckua top 10

The most-played, folk, roots and world
music discs on ckua radio - www.ckua.org
- throughout July, 2004

1. Thievery Corporation
2. The Bills
3. Iron and Wine
4. Patty Griffin
5. The Magnetic Fields
6. Various Artists
7. AA Sound System
8. Wilco
9. Buddy & Julie Miller
10. Ron Sexsmith

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| International Sound | (Beggars Group) |
| Let 'Em Run | (Borealis) |
| Our Endless Numbered Days | (Sub Pop) |
| Impossible Dream | (Ato) |
| I | (Warner) |
| Old Enough To Know Better | (Merge) |
| Lily Plain You Are Hardly Poor | (Independent) |
| A Ghost Is Born | (Nonsuch) |
| Love Snuck Up | (Hightone) |
| Retriever | (Warner) |



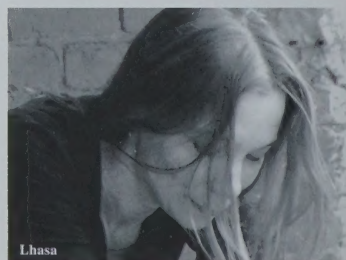
Buddy & Julie Miller

moondance top 10

Compiled from July sales at Moondance,
425 George St., N., Peterborough, Ontario,
K9H 3R4

1. Ronnie Earl
2. Blackie & The Rodeo Kings
3. Harry Manx
4. Ron Sexsmith
5. Silverhearts
6. David Francey
7. Ani DiFranco
8. Lhasa
9. The Be Good Tanyas
10. Michael Chapman

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Now My Soul | (Story Plain) |
| BARK | (True North) |
| West Eats Meet | (DogMyCat) |
| Retriever | (Warner) |
| Our Precious City | (Killer) |
| Skating Rink | (Laker Music) |
| Educated Guess | (Righteous Babe) |
| The Living Road | (Audiogramme) |
| Blue Horse | (Nettwerk) |
| Almost Alone | (Voice Print) |



Lhasa

hmv top 15

Compiled from July sales in all HMV stores right across Canada

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Corb Lund | Five Dollar Bill | (Story Plain) |
| 2. | Marc Anthony | Amar Sin Mentiras | (Sony) |
| 3. | Spanish Harlem Orchestra | Across 110th Street | (Rykko) |
| 4. | Buena Vista Social Club | Buena Vista Social Club | (World Circuit) |
| 5. | Cesaria Evora | Best Of | (BMG) |
| 6. | Zucchero | Zu & Co | (Universal) |
| 7. | Yousou N'Dour | Egypt | (Nonesuch) |
| 8. | The Gypsy Kings | Roots | (Warner Bros) |
| 9. | Jim White | Drill A Hole In That Substrate | (Luaka Bop) |
| 10. | The Gypsy Kings | Greatest Hits | (Warner Bros) |
| 11. | Various Artists | Hecho En Cuba Habana | (Isba) |
| 12. | IThe rish Rovers | Best Of... | (MCA) |
| 13. | Marc Anthony | Marc Anthony | (Sony) |
| 14. | Judy Collins | Colors Of The Day Remastered | (Warners) |
| 15. | Paul Butterfield | Paul Butterfield Blues | (Electra) |

galliard top 10

Compiled from July sales at Galliard Music, 101 - 3 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, BC

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Warsaw Village Band | People's Spring | (World Village) |
| 2. | Suzi LeBlanc | Chants d'Acadie - La Mer Jolie | (Atma) |
| 3. | Amestoy | Le Fil | (Daqui) |
| 4. | Tango-Orkesteri Unto | Finnish Tango | (Arc) |
| 5. | Mike Marshall & Chris Thile | Into The Caudron | (Sugar Hill) |
| 6. | Wailin' Jennys | 40 Days | (Jericho Beach) |
| 7. | Margo Leverett & The Klezmer... | Self Titled | (Traditional) |
| 8. | Sandy Lopicic Orchestra | Balka | (Network) |
| 9. | Oi Va Voi | Laughter Through Tears | (Outcaste) |
| 10. | Paris To Kiev | Variances | (Olesia) |

music top 10

Compiled from July sales at Music, 4137A 263 Huron Rd., Sebringville, Ontario

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Gordon Lightfoot | Harmony | (Linus) |
| 2. | Harry Manx | West Eats Meet | (DogMyCat) |
| 3. | The Wailin' Jennys | 40 Days | (Jericho Beach) |
| 4. | Sarah Harmer | All Of Our Names | (Universal) |
| 5. | Gordie Sampson | Sunburn | (MapleMusic) |
| 6. | Mae Moore & Lester Quitau | Oh My! | (Festival) |
| 7. | The Bills | Let 'Em Run | (Borealis) |
| 8. | Michael Jerome Browne | & The Twin Rivers String Band | (Borealis) |
| 9. | Various Artists | Canoe Songs Vol 1 | (Portage) |
| 10. | Way Past Midnight | Pork Belly Futures | (Opening Night) |

a & b sound top 10

Compiled from July sales in all a & b sound stores across Canada

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Bob Marley & The Wailers | Legend Remastered | (Island) |
| 2. | Toots & The Maytals | True Love | (BMG) |
| 3. | The Bills | Let 'Em Run | (Borealis) |
| 4. | Gordon Lightfoot | Harmony | (Linus) |
| 5. | Jesse Cook | Nomad | (Narada) |
| 6. | Wailin' Jennys | 40 Days | (Jericho Beach) |
| 7. | Etha James | Blues To The Bone | (RCA) |
| 8. | Various Artists | Reggae Gold 2004 | (VP Records) |
| 9. | Nick Drake | Made To Love Magic | (Island) |
| 10. | Ruthie Foster | Stages | (Blue Corn Music) |

highlife top 10

Compiled from July sales at Highlife Records 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, B.C.

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Thievery Corporation | International Sound | (ESL) |
| 2. | Yousou N'Dour | Egypt | (Nonesuch) |
| 3. | Kaya Project | Walking Through | (Interchill) |
| 4. | P.J. Harvey | Uh Huh Her | (Island) |
| 5. | Bebel Gilberto | Bebel Gilberto | (Six Degrees) |
| 6. | Calexico | Convict Pool | (Quarterstick) |
| 7. | Various Artists | Festival In The Desert | (World Village) |
| 8. | k.d. lang | hymns of The 49th Parallel | (Nonesuch) |
| 9. | Toots & The Maytals | True Love | (BMG) |
| 10. | Hi Fidelity | Dub Sessions 5 | (Guidance) |

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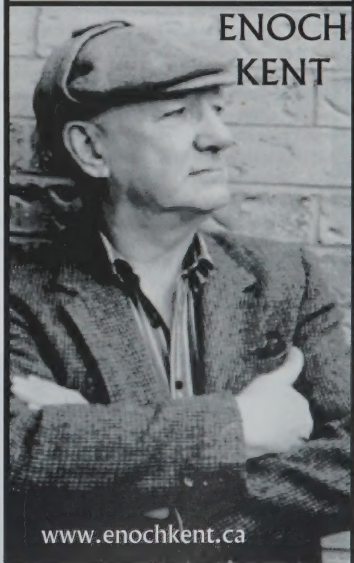
"Ballads at their best"

- Penguin Eggs

"A beguiling songwriter"

- Acoustic Guitar

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Two major Canadian folk festivals lost their artistic directors this past summer. **Don Bird** resigned from Summerfolk Music & Crafts Festival in Owen Sound as did **Rick Fenton** from The Winnipeg Folk Music Festival.

Bird, who has booked performers for Summerfolk for the past 10 years, left due to a contract dispute with the Board of the Georgian Bay Folk Society who run the festival. They offered him a one-year contract renewal to produce the 30th anniversary event in 2005 at a greatly reduced fee.

"I am unhappy with the direction that is being taken by the Board," said Bird in a press release. "I really feel I have no choice."

"I'm very proud of what has been accomplished in the last 10 years. The festival not only broke new ground artistically, but made money every single year, and achieved new attendance records - all done without ever having gone over budget."

"Despite the financial and artistic growth of the festival, the talent budget has been cut, and promotion has been dramatically reduced, especially in the critical local media which reaches the community," said Bird.

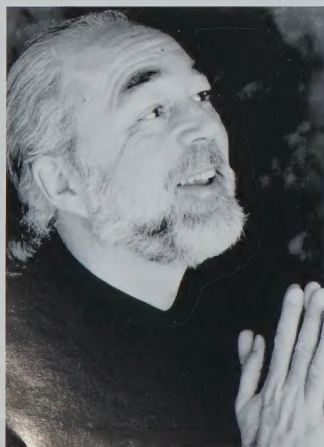
He will continue as the artistic director of the Owen Sound Celtic Music Festival, which has no connection to his previous employers.

After four years with the Winnipeg folk festival, Fenton left under less arduous circumstances. He will now make DVDs with the Winnipeg company Yayoi, who have the worldwide distribution rights for an upcoming release of the **Guess Who's** 2001 reunion tour.

"When opportunity knocked I couldn't say no," said Fenton. "It was a tough decision."

He is currently editing a DVD for the Edmonton Folk Music Festival from film footage shot this summer. He will also continue producing records. His credits include **Nathan Rogers'** debut disc, *True Stories* and **Ian Tyson's** *Live At Longview*.

★ ★ ★



Don Bird: resigns from Summerfolk

Chuck Angus of **The Grievous Angels** was elected NDP Member of Parliament for the riding of Timmins-James Bay on the June 28 Canadian federal election. Angus received 14,138 votes - 613 more than his nearest rival, Liberal, **Raymond Chénier**. The Liberals had held this riding since 1968. Angus was one of 19 NDP candidates elected and has been given portfolios of Agriculture and Canadian Arts and Heritage in the Shadow Cabinet. The Grievous Angels last recording, *Hanging Songs*, was released in 2003.

★ ★ ★

Sylvia Tyson will receive the **Estelle Klein** Award at the Ontario Council of Folk Festival's annual conference in Guelph, October 14-17.

The Award honours those who have played a considerable role in shaping and inspiring the folk music scene in Ontario.

With her former husband, **Ian Tyson**, the duo **Ian and Sylvia** emerged from Toronto's coffee-houses to gain universal recognition during the folk revival of the early sixties. Together they recorded 13 albums, including the groundbreaking country-rock release, *Great Speckled Bird*, before parting ways in the mid 1970s.

Sylvia then established a career with CBC radio hosting the folk show, *Touch the Earth* and a national CBC television show, *Country in My Soul*. She also released several solo albums, including the most recent *River Road and Other Stories* and continues to record and perform with the award-winning combo, **Quartette**.

★ ★ ★

Toronto-based blues-rock guitarist and jazz trumpeter **Jeff Healey** received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from McMaster University in Hamilton, ON, June 3, for his outstanding achievements in music and for work with various charities in his community. Healey performed live at the ceremony. "I'm thrilled to be recognized by McMaster for my contributions to the arts," said Healey. "It's good to be a doctor."

★ ★ ★



Sylvia Tyson: Estelle Klein Award winner

Le Vent du Nord have added guitarist and vocalist **Simon Beaudry** to their ranks. From the Lanaudière region of Québec, Beaudry grew up surrounded by traditional music. His maternal grandfather is well known in the area for his repertoire of songs and his paternal grandfather **Joseph Beaudry (Tido)** is a fiddler. Simon's father sings and plays guitar and his brother Eric performs with **La Bottine Souriante**. **Le Vent du Nord** hope to record the follow up to their Juno Award-winning *Roots* Traditional Album of the Year, *Maudite Moisson!* in October.

★ ★ ★

Willie P. Bennett had his van broken into in Hamilton, ON, in June and the culprits stole his Mandolin, Martin Guitar and notebook computer. The Mandolin is a 1992 Flatiron A-model with a tobacco sunburst finish. It is cased in a Calton molded case that is base white with blue, yellow and red paint splatters. It is a match to Fred **Eaglesmith's** guitar case and a one of a kind. The guitar is a 1972 Martin 000-28 that is cased in a white cream colored Calton case. Bennett is offering a \$1000.00 reward for the return of these instruments, no questions asked. Anyone with information can contact 519 583-3878.

★ ★ ★

Jowi Taylor, host of CBC Radio's *Global Village* has inspired the making of a very unique Canadian guitar. This instrument will be made from material that symbolizes the Canadian identity. It will include wood from the schooner *Bluenose*, a canoe paddle that belonged to former Prime Minister **Pierre Trudeau** and the sacred spruce of the Haida. It will be built under the project name, *Six-String Nation*, by master luthier **George Rizsanyi**, from Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. Rizsanyi has made guitars for the likes of **Sting**, **Keith Richards** and **James Taylor**. Upon completion, musicians such as **Stephen Fearing** and **Art Turner** will play the *Six-String Nation* guitar as part of a national TV series.

★ ★ ★



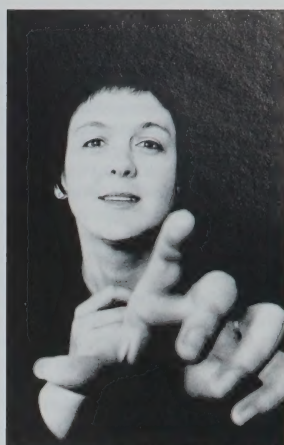
Chuck Angus: Member of Parliament



Colleen Peterson: New album



Bob Evans: Western Canada Music Award Nomination



Arlene Bishop: Rising Star Award

Toronto-based acoustic bluesman **Doe MacLean** is recording at Stagg Street Studio in Los Angeles with **Colin Linden** and members of **Tom Waits'** band. Linden and MacLean began their careers as an acoustic duo in the early 1970s, recording for Flying Fish Records. Linden is producing as well as adding some guitar, mandolin and vocal parts. Waite's bassist and percussionist **Larry Taylor** and **Steven Hodges** are providing most of the instrumental backdrop. Their involvement developed after a listen to a demo of MacLean's newer songs. Special guests will include Toronto harmonica player **Michael Pickett** and members of a Watts church choir. MacLean has recently been making a living as a street singer. A finished master of the their efforts should be completed by late September.

★ ★ ★

Penny Lang also started work on a new album, with recording to take place in Montréal and New York City. **Roma Baran** will produce. From Montréal, Baran has worked with **Laurie Anderson** and toured initially as a duo with **Kate McGarrigle**. Musicians involved include former **David Francey** guitarist, **Dave Clarke**, and ex **Full Tilt Boogie** keyboard player **Ken Pearson**.

Terry Tufts is also in the studio this fall. Musicians on Tufts' sessions include **Mark Ferguson** (**The Funk Brothers**) keyboards and **John Geggie** (**Lynn Miles**, **Angstones**) bass; **Bill Garrett** will handle production.

★ ★ ★

Colleen Peterson's *Postcards From California* is set for release this fall. It's a collection of her original demos recorded in California by co-writer **Nancy Simmonds** and digitized and restored from the original eight-track cassette masters by co-producers **Simmonds** and **David Bradstreet**. They also added new instruments harmonies and arrangements. **David Woodhead**, and **Doug McArthur** are just some of the musicians involved in this recording. Peterson, a Juno award-winning singer-songwriter died in 1996

★ ★ ★

Montreal-based singer-songwriter **Rob Lutes** has won the prestigious Philadelphia Songwriters Project – Road Song Contest. Lutes submission, *Cold Canadian Road*, was selected out of more than 250 songs. His prizes included a slot at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. *Cold Canadian Road* was inspired in part by the writing of **Jack London**.

★ ★ ★

MIT Podolak, founder of the Winnipeg, Vancouver and Stan Rogers' Memorial folk festivals, has launched the Walnut Street booking Agency, primarily to work with Pinawa, MB, singer-songwriter, **Dan Frechette**. This past summer Frechette recorded his debut disc, *Lucky Day*, in Winnipeg with **Bill Bourne** as producer. It's due for release early in the fall. For more information on the Walnut Street Agency contact (204) 452-9681

★ ★ ★

Galaxie, the CBC's online subscriber-based non-commercial radio network has developed several sponsorship deals with the likes of The Ontario Council of Folk Festivals and The Edmonton Folk Music Festival to help promote new talent with its Rising Star Awards.

Judged as best up-and-coming Canadian artist performing in Edmonton, **Arlene Bishop** took the Rising Star Awards top prize of \$2500. Runner-up **Rae Spoon** received \$1000. Both recipients received their cheques from CBC Radio's, Saturday Night Blues' host, **Holger Petersen** on the festival mainstage. Galaxie Radio features such speciality music programming as folk-roots, Celtic and world music.

Galaxie Rising Star Awards will also be presented at the October OCFF conference in Guelph, ON, for the various categories assigned to the Council's Songs From The Heart competition. The overall winners include Toronto-based **Michelle Rasky** for her English entry *Into the New*. The French award will go to both **Darryn Grandbois** for *Oh! Canada* and **Michel Payment** for *Ouendaké*. The y will each receive \$1,000, showcases at the conference, the Guelph Songwriters Festival, Bluebird North, and prominent air-time on Galaxie, which reaches four million homes..

The OCFF will also award cash prizes of \$100 to the winners of various different categories: World Music: **Eliana Cuevas** for *Rompe mi Alma*; Instrumental: **Jason Fowler** for *Midwestern Lament*; Political: **Segun Akinlolu** for *The Small People's Anthem*; Humour: **Caroline Wiles** for *Little Boobs*. For OCFF conference information and registration details see www.ocff.ca or call toll free, 1-866-292-6233.

★ ★ ★

Categories and nominations for the Western Canada Music Awards hosted in Calgary, AB, Sept. 30 – Oct. 3 include: Outstanding Roots Recording, **The Clumsy Lovers** – *After the Flood*; **Doug Cox** and **Todd Butler** – *Dobro and Guitar*; **Po' Girl** – *Po' Girl*; **Mae Moore & Lester Quitzau** – *Oh My!*; **The Wallin' Jennys** – *40 Days*.

Outstanding Blues Recording: **Big Dave McLean** – *Blues From the Middle*; **Jim Byrnes** – *Fresh Horses*; **Shaden Garrett & The Stratospheres** – *Shaden Garrett & The Stratospheres*; **Mocking Shadows** – *Out of the Blue*; **Aylie Sparkes** – *Beautiful & Deranged*; **The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir** – *Saint Hubert*. Outstanding Aboriginal Recording: **Burnt** – *Project 1: The Avenue*; **Kimberly Dawn** – *I'm Going Home*; **Eagle & Hawk** – *Mother Earth*; **Wayne Lavallee** – *Green Dress*; **Jill Paquette** – *Jill Paquette*.

Outstanding Instrumental Recording: **Great Uncles of the Revolution** – *Blow the House Down*; **Martin Mayer** – *This Is Who I Am*; **Stephen Franke & Noises From The Toolshed** – *Songs For a Platinum Blonde Diner Waitress*; **Bob Evans** – *The Voice in the Grain*; **Joël Fafard** – *Rocking Horse*.

Two locales that frequently host folk and roots performers – Winnipeg's West End Cultural Centre and Calgary's Nickelodeon Music Club – were nominated for Live Music Venue of the Year in the Industry Award categories. The Nick celebrates the start of its 25th season, September 25, with **Tom Russell** and **Andrew Hardin**.

★ ★ ★

The greatly respected U.K. magazine *fRoots* celebrated its 25th anniversary in July with the publication of Issue no. 253. Started in 1979, as *Southern Rag: The Folk Magazine* for Surrey, Middlesex, Berkshire, North Hampshire, Sussex and Around, it featured a cover photo of accordionist **Pete Coe** of the **New Victory Band** under a banner 'Buy this magazine and find out what is due to this man's nose!' That initial issue had four record reviews; the current edition has more than a 100. In July of 1985, *Southern Rag* became *Folk Roots* and moved from a quarterly to its present schedule of ten issues a year. Due to ongoing derisory comments, Editor **Ian Anderson** shortened the "F" word in December 1998. Now pronounced ef-roots, it's the most influential magazine of its kind – consistently cham-

pioning wonderful but obscure global folk and roots music. Over the years, it has been at the forefront providing international recognition for a long list of musicians and singers the likes of **Dick Gaughan**, **The Pogues**, **Flaco Jimenez**, **Yousou N'Dour**, **Ali Farka Toure** and **Baaba Maal**. Indeed, without *Folk Roots* there would have been no Penguin Eggs, wrote editor **Roddy Campbell** in his very first editorial in recognition of Anderson's fearless cover features, which once included, *Jaipongan Music of Java*. [See the *fRoots* ad on page 60]

★ ★ ★

Still in the U.K., **Real World Records** celebrated its 15th anniversary this summer. Founded as a collaboration between **Peter Gabriel** and **WOMAD** in 1979, the label provides talented artists from around the world with access to state-of-the-art recording facilities and audiences beyond their geographic region. The latest releases from **Real World** include **Rizawan-Muazzam Qawwali's** *Day Of Colours* and **Afro Celt Sound System's**, *Pod*.

The London, England, based **World Music Network** turned ten years old this year. This is the

I am a DJ; I am what I play

Mike Regenstreif has hosted *Folk Roots/Folk Branches* on **CKUT 90.3 FM** in **Montréal** since 1994. A broadly defined program, it draws on a wide variety of traditional and contemporary folk and roots that range from Klezmer to Cajun and all stops in between. The show is usually programmed thematically akin to folk festival workshops. Mike's guests can include anyone from **Jesse Winchester** to **Judy Collins**. "I've been around the folk scene for about 35 years and *Folk Roots/Folk Branches* is informed by my years as a music journalist, and on my earlier experiences running folk clubs, working on festivals, producing concerts and representing artists, singer-songwriter," says Mike, who also writes for *Sing Out!* and the *Montréal Gazette*.



Mike Regenstreif hosts *Folk Roots/Folk Branches* on **CKUT 90.3 FM** in **Montréal**, Thursday mornings from 9 - 11:30 EST. It can also be heard at www.ckut.ca/listen.php

label that releases the various *Rough Guide* recordings – 130 in all to date, including *The Rough Guide To Canada*. It has also just launched *Introducing* – a new budget-priced label. **Vakoka**, featured on page 17, is one of its three initial releases. The others include **Suke** and **Shiyani Ngcobo**.

★ ★ ★

September 21, **Red House Records** releases the benefit disc, *13 Ways to Live*. Money generated from this recording is being donated to the **Nobel Peace Prize**-winning organization, the **Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation**, and is earmarked for victims of the **Iraq war**. The **VVAF** is an international humanitarian organization which addresses the causes, conduct and consequences of war through programs of advocacy and service for victims of conflict. *13 Ways to Live* features such prominent Texas songwriters as **Alejandro Escovedo**, **Butch Hancock**, **Patty Griffin** and **Eliza Gilkyson**. All tracks on the album were recorded specifically for this project.

Red House also announced recently that its *Going Driftless: An Artists Tribute To Greg Brown* raised over \$50,000 for the **Breast Cancer Fund** of

America. It too featured an all-star cast the likes of **Lucinda Williams** and **Gillian Welch**. **Greg Brown** personally requested that proceeds from the record go to the **Fund** in honour of his close friend **Widdie Hall**, who ran the **Folkways** venue in **New Hampshire**. She died from the disease.

★ ★ ★

The **National Academy of Recording Sciences** will add a **Hawaiian Music** category to the 2005, 47th Annual **Grammy Awards**. The new category, **Best Hawaiian Music Album**, took 15 years of lobbying by the island's music industry to secure.

★ ★ ★

A five-CD **Sandy Denny** boxed set *A Boxful of Treasures* is imminent on **David Suff's** *Fledgling* label. **Suff** had access to **Island Records'** archives and uncovered a variety of lost or overlooked studio recordings, including out-takes and other hitherto unreleased material and live performances. Much like his definitive treatment of **Shirley Collins**, *Within Sound*, the set comes with all manner of supporting literature. Contact www.the-beesknees.com for details of the special pre-publication offer.

★ ★ ★

Ireland's **Dervish** were awarded the freedom of their hometown, **Sligo**, in May. The band was honoured for bringing the distinctive **Sligo** style of traditional music to a world-wide audience over the past thirteen years. They were presented with a large crystal charger which was later filled with champagne and emptied at their local, **Furey's bar**. We are assured, however, that singer **Cathy Jordan** managed to get it home intact. In other **Dervish** news, their flute player, **Liam Kelly**, has been commissioned to write an instrumental piece for the **Football Association of Ireland** in preparation for **World Cup** qualifying matches that begin in September.

★ ★ ★

Guitarist **Brian Willoughby** left **The Strawbs** after their **Edmonton** folk festival appearance in August. He had been with the band since 1978. Willoughby's second solo album, the instrumental *Fingers Crossed*, will be released by **Road Goes On Forever Records** in September.



Dervish: Freedom of Sligo



Photo: © 2004 Andrew Strauss

Estelle Klein 1930-2004

When Estelle Klein died in June this year, the Canadian folk music world lost a significant figure, a joyful and sometimes stubborn advocate for our music, and the single most influential person in the development of the folk festival as we now know it, writes Richard Flohill

Estelle was not the founder of the first folk festival in Canada – that credit goes to Ruth Jones, who started Mariposa in 1962. Her subsequent involvement as the event's artistic director set the multi-stage "workshop" format that festivals have since built on.

Some of her innovations have fallen by the wayside. For instance, early Mariposa festivals paid all the performers equally – something that was difficult to do back in the early '60s, but Estelle's strength of purpose, and her persuasiveness made it possible, at least for a few years.

She insisted that workshops illuminated either specific topics or shared instrumental skills, and were always discussed with participating artists in the planning stages. This, alas, is now much harder to do – thanks to the barriers (agents, managers, publicity people) that so many artists erect between themselves and the people who employ them.

She also demanded that crafts people not only display and sell their creations – but demonstrated the skills they had mastered. A few people may still remember, from those Mariposas on Toronto Island – the northern Aboriginals who, starting from scratch a week before the event, built a wonderful canoe as hundreds watched them. Or the gentlemen from Vermont who made whiskbrooms by hand – an art that has since probably vanished along with the last buggy-whip.

Estelle was not a folk purist. She loved older traditional music, and went out of her way to bring to her festival those who proudly recalled the roots of music. But she was more than willing to lead the way in bringing what we now call "world music" artists to festivals, and she

similarly brought Aboriginal artists to Mariposa – not because it would later be politically correct to do so, but because their music was strong, inspiring, and wonderfully uplifting for her audiences to hear.

Yes, she hired rootsy rock bands early – Kensington Market, a wonderful band from the Yorkville club scene, got a mainstage spot in the mid-'60s, and probably scared the bejesus out of the "folkies" in the audience, who were seen stuffing cigarette papers in their ears. More importantly, she spotted people early, and a who's-who of artists – all now Canadian icons – made important and ground-breaking "career" appearances at the festival: Ian & Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell and Buffy-Sainte Marie among them.

She was similarly proactive in programming music for children, and her friends Sharon Hampton, Lois Lillianstein and Bram Morrison – Sharon, Lois & Bram to millions of preschoolers – were Mariposa veterans who were mentored by Estelle for more than 30 years.

Estelle had a way with artists; she held hands when necessary, and she could be stern when that was called for. She tolerated their foibles, but if they stepped out of line, she would call them on it every time. She dealt with crises calmly (although there were a few times when she retreated to a private corner and shed tears if some particularly unpleasant incident occurred), and she was ready to steer a workshop back on course with a quick few words with a host, if she felt it was drifting astray.

Best of all, artists liked Estelle. Her friendships with artists as varied as Bob Dylan and Taj Mahal, David Amram and Pete Seeger – all of whom spent time with her and her architect husband Jack in their Rosedale home. (Ian and Sylvia lived in the upstairs apartment).

After close to 20 years with Mariposa, she left to pursue other assignments at the Ontario Science Centre and Toronto's Harbourfront Centre. In recent years, she co-founded and spearheaded (with harmonica player Mike Stevens) an organization called ArtsCan Circle, designed to bring music and musicians to at-risk kids in Canada's far north.

Only weeks before her death – after a brief and stubborn fight with cancer – she programmed an event at Hugh's Room in Toronto to benefit ArtsCan. It was perfect: Norman Kennedy, a Scottish singer now living in the United States, came to open the show; Adam Mitchell came from Nashville, Mike Stevens played (and showed pictures of the ArtsCan kids) and dozens more took part – either as volunteers or as performers – in what was, in fact a tribute to Estelle.

It would surprise nobody who knew her if – as I write and as you read – she is orchestrating a major workshop somewhere. It includes as varied a line-up of distinguished artists, old-timers and newcomers as only she could assemble. And it will amuse, educate, and charm its audience. And they'll probably be dancing as well.

If I may, perhaps a personal note is in order: I owe my "career" and certainly my life in music to Estelle. In 1965, she asked me to co-host a blues workshop with Richard Waterman (taking part, if I recall correctly, Son House, Sippie Wallace, and Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry and maybe John Hammond).

At that festival, and the ones in the next few years, I heard all those Canadian artists listed elsewhere, shared drinks with Pop and Mavis Staples, sipped pop on the steps of an old wooden building with Phil Ochs, helped rescue Buddy Guy when he fell underneath the stage, met Richie Havens and Pete Seeger, Rambling Jack, Rosalie Sorrels, James Taylor and I thank you knows how many more – every one of whom changed the music I was listening to, and the way I listened to it. I joined Mariposa's board, handled its publicity until the early '80s, and went on, later, to become the events AD from 1988 to 1992.

For the fact that I now have widely eclectic musical tastes and have carved a meager but rewarding living in music ever since, I thank Estelle Klein from the bottom of my heart.

Similarly, I know that thousands of other people, as a result of Estelle's dedication and work, came to discover music they never knew existed.

– Richard Flohill

Agnes 'Sis' Cunningham 1909 – 2004

Sis Cunningham, who died aged 95 in New Paltz, New York on 27 June, was one of the founders of Broadside, one of the most influential folk magazines of the second half of the last century, writes Ken Hunt. Born in Watonga, Oklahoma on 19 February 1909 into a socialist family that supported the political activist Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926), she was the third of five children. Her eldest brother William Cunningham (1901-1967) went on to become an acclaimed Oklahoma writer who, much like C. Day Lewis whose crime fiction subsidised his poetry, knocked out pulp fiction alongside his politicized novels such as *Green Corn Rebellion* and *Pretty Boy*, the latter work being a fictionalised account of *Pretty Boy* Floyd of Woody Guthrie fame.

Sis Cunningham told her tale in detail in her and her husband, George Friesen's, joint biography, *Red Dust and Broadside's* (1999). To complete the story of her life and times, listen to Smithsonian Folkways' five-CD boxed set *The Best of Broadside 1962-1988* (2000). The latter volume brings together a catalogue of names and titles that include Blind Boy Grunt/Bob Dylan, Peter La Farge, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, Matt McGinn, Phil Ochs, Thom Parrott, Malvina Reynolds (along with Ochs the most prolific contributor of new songs of social justice and social conscience), Leon Rosselson, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Pete Seeger and Nina Simone. That was a visionary assembly of talent. Many people beat a path to the Friesens



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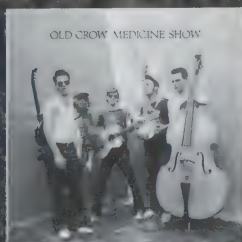
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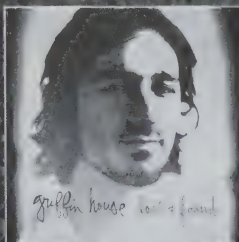
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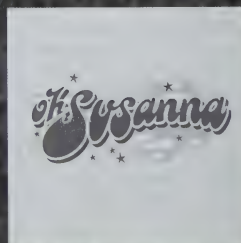
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Cunningham grew up about 30 miles from Weatherfield and the man, Gordon Friesen (1909-1996), two weeks her junior and a writer, whom she married on 23 July 1941 after the proverbial whirlwind romance. Cunningham went into teaching, like her brother Bill, starting studies at Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas in the summer of 1931. Whilst there she wrote a song called *How Can You Keep Movin'*. The New Lost City Ramblers picked up on it. By the time Ry Cooder covered it on *Into The Purple Valley* her compositional credits had changed to trad, and it took years for her to sort the mess (of accrued royalties) out. She took the path of political activism, joining the Red Dust Players in 1939, hence the other inspiration for the autobiography's title alongside the red dust of Oklahoma where for Commies the corn certainly did not grow as high as an elephant's eye. The next year the couple met Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger in Oklahoma. That meeting led to them upping roots for New York and moving into the orbit of the Almanac Singers, still in their first year. They were the first urban folksinging group of any stature that the United States produced, as Songs For Political Action: Folkmusic, Topical Songs And The American Left 1926-1953 (1996) documents, though the Almanacs were far from the first act to take up the cudgels. Within a year of the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, the Almanacs had been drafted, gone to sea or whatever and the Friesens moved to Detroit where they founded a substitute Almanacs and lived until 1944. They were exactly wrongly placed politically for what happened under McCarthyism. Friesen was blacklisted. The FBI was on their back.

Thus when a new generation of songwriters began to break through in the early 1960s the Friesens were there to encourage. They knew the score. They knew the power of song. Broadside started in 1962 and eventually folded in 1988. If you hold copies of the mimeographed magazine in your hands now, it looks crude, but what cannot be contradicted is the power of the words it contained. Agnes 'Sis' Cunningham was many things: social and political activist, musician, publisher and songwriter. Most of all, she gave succour to one of the great popular music movements of our age: intelligent, engaged song.

Coxsone Dodd 1932-2004

The world of Jamaican music lost one of its major shaping influences on May 4 when Clement Seymour Dodd died in Kingston, Jamaica, writes Ken Hunt. Born in the same city on January, 26, 1932, he had gone from a sound system operator (as Sir Coxsone the Downbeat around 1954 battling with Duke Reid's Trojan system) to creating a whole new world of music, initially for Jamaica but latterly for the world through a record label that he mas-

terminded called Studio One. Amongst the artists that he launched upon the world and championed were Dennis Brown, Burning Spear, the Heptones, the Maytals, Lee 'Scratch' Perry and the Wailers. Naturally, it can be argued that their quality would have shone through anyway. But Dodd was the one that realised their potential and put them on the path. Imagining a world without Bob Marley, then just a member of the Wailers, is impossible now. That is emblematic of what Dodd unleashed on the world.

Tony De La Rosa 1931-2004

The Tex-Mex bandleader and accordionist Antonio De La Rosa born in Sarita (the title of one of his early polka compositions), Texas on October 31, 1931 died in Corpus Christi, Texas, June 2, writes Ken Hunt. He had taken the traditional sensibilities of the accordion maestro Narciso Martinez and wrenched them into a new world where traditional forms like polka were rock'n'rolled into the present. That said, he was already recording by the end of the 1940s, initially for local labels, later for consciousness-shaping ones such as Arhoolie and Rounder. *Mi Ultimo Beso* (My last kiss) released in 2001 provided his farewell but such an appropriate form of farewell.

Carlos Paredes 1925-2004

The death of maestro Carlos Paredes on July 23 is a great loss to Portuguese art, writes Ken Hunt. Not only was he the signature 'vocalist' of the guitarra portuguesa (Portuguese guitar), he was a composer whose work was imbued with the spirit of fado, much like Astor Piazzolla bottled tango in a new way. Born on February 16, 1925, Paredes created haunting melodies solo or as an accompanist. When he played on that metal-strung guitar it was like blood coursing through the cranium, like fado. Two of his compositions, *Canção Verde Anes* (Song of the green years) from the film of the same name and *Romance No. 1* appeared on the Kronos Quartet project, *Kronos Caravan* (2000) that I wrote notes for. Paredes had been in poor health for years and his death was expected. His music – try *Guitarra Portuguesa* (EMI Portugal (1987)) – is as timeless as splintered light on metal strings and will remain ever so, as long as blood flows.

Ben Shabalala 1958-2004

Ben Shabalala, was shot dead, June 16, in a suburb of Durban, South Africa at the age of 46, writes Roddy Campbell. He was a former member of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the a cappella ensemble started by his older brother Joseph. Ben joined the group in 1979 and sang with them on Paul Simon's 1986 Grammy Award winning album, *Graceland*. Ladysmith Black Mambazo also won a Grammy in 1987 for their recording *Shaka Zulu*, of which Ben

was also a part. He eventually decided that the sacrifices demanded were no longer personally sustainable and he left the group in 1993 in order to spend more time with his family. Joseph and Ben's other brother, Headman Shabalala, was murdered by an off-duty white policeman in 1991. And Joseph's wife, Nellie, was also shot in Durban in 2002.



Ray Charles

Ray Charles 1930 - 2004

Ray Charles, the innovative singer and pianist whose combinations of blues, rhythm & blues, and gospel pioneered soul music died, June 11, in Beverly Hills, California. He was 73, writes Roddy Campbell.

Ray Charles Robinson – he later changed his name to avoid confusion with the noted boxer – was born in Albany, Georgia, on September 23, 1930. After the disease glaucoma left him blind as a child, Charles was sent to a school for the deaf and blind in Florida, where he developed a lifelong talent and passion for music.

He began his recording career in 1949 when he cut Confession Blues for the Downbeat label. It went to No 2 in the r&b charts. However, it was his blending of gospel and blues on the 1954 recording of *I Got a Woman*, that is often credited as the beginning of soul music. In 1959 he broke through to white audiences with a Top-10 hit, *What'd I Say*. A year later, he won his first of twelve Grammys for his cover of *Georgia on My Mind*.

In 1962, Charles decided to release *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, which again broke new ground by combining soul and country music. It went to number No 1. But Charles also had his struggles. In 1964 he was arrested on drug charges and admitted struggling with heroin addiction for 20 years. While the hits dried up in the '70s, he remained a popular concert draw and appeared in the hit 1980 movie *The Blues Brothers*. He was also an inaugural inductee into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. Ray Charles played his 10,000th concert May 23, 2003 in Los Angeles, CA.



Photo: By David Ingram

Fiamma Fumana: Fiamma Orlandi, Alberto Cottica, Jessica Lombardi & Mehdi Paolis

Waulking Back To Happiness

Italy's Fiamma Fumana resurrected a folk tradition on the verge of extinction. And they did it with the judicious use of modern and ancient instruments. Formed after a drink or two in a Bologna bar, they want to put traditional music on the pop charts. "We really believe in the need to keep traditional music fresh," Alberto Cottica tells Roddy Campbell.

It all seems a bit of a blur now. The Winnipeg folk festival. Vancouver. Calgary. Edmonton. Countless songs. Countless tunes. Countless pints. A rare old time altogether, summer in these parts.

The dust has settled now, though. The musicians and singers have all gone home. The Buena Vista Social Club back to Cuba. Natalie Merchant to the U.S. of A. Shoglenifty to Scotland. Stompin' Tom to Skinners Pond. Ah, memories are made of bliss. So trust me when I tell you to mark this name down in your jotters: Fiamma Fumana.

With Jessica Lombardi, their tall, vivacious young emiliana piva piper – hair more colours of red than a sunburn – Fiamma Orlandi – a tiny effervescent singer with a voice as big and dramatic as Mt. Etna – Mehdi Paolis – a stoic yet judicious beatbox boffin – and Alberto Cottica – an affable accordionist and guitarist of unimaginable foresight – these northern Italians created more thrills this summer, short of the Greek national football team.

Instead of disciplined soccer, however, Fiamma Fumana play an effortlessly engaging fusion of folk-roots and electronica. Not the first, of course. But what makes them really quite re-

markable, they had next to no regional tradition to draw from. The Roman Catholic Church saw to that. Dancing and singing was the Devil's work, apparently. And so they had to uncover material from Alan Lomax' field recordings from the '50s, library tapes of fiddler Melchiade Benni, and tap original sources such as the now elderly group of women singers, Choir of Mondine di Novi.

To their immortal credit, Fiamma Fumana did indeed resurrect a terminal folk heritage and very naturally assimilated it with Scottish and Irish reels and jigs. The odd waulking song too. While these songs are traditionally associated with the Hebridean Islands, and used as a rhythm to accompany the labour-intensive stretching of tweed, evidently, they were also fairly common around Emilia Romagna in the northwest of Italy for community tasks such as the washing of clothes or weaving. Set to Paolis's pulsating beatbox, the results are truly electrifying.

Like any band worth its salt, the genesis of Fiamma (Fire) Fumana (Fog) involved a drink or two. The principle culprits involved were Alberto Cottica and his pal, Marco Bertoni.

"We would sit there in the pub in Bologna and say, 'It would be really great to have a band to do traditional music with electronica in Italy. So let's do one'," says Cottica over a nice glass of iced-tea during a break from the revelry at the recent Calgary folk festival.

"To play traditional music in a place like Italy, where tradition is pretty much dead, we had to borrow a lot of tricks from the Irish or the Scots. Maybe the very first band that really got us go-

ing on this was from Scotland, Mouth Music. Mouth Music's first album is so beautiful even though the programming is very raw. The playing is maybe not top league but the singing is beautiful and the ideas are great.

"I went to Scotland and Ireland. I got really envious because they had a living musical tradition and we didn't. So from then on the reason became, 'Okay let's make one. Let's try and bring it back. Let's invent it if it doesn't exist.' It's too nice a concept – people sharing some sort of common background. We don't have a background in music, unless it's court music, opera."

Martyn Bennett, The Afro-Celt Sound System and Anglo-Indian djs like Talvin Singh also inspired Bertoni and Cottica's fledgling notions. Eventually, in 1999, they got around to recording *Fiamma Fumana 1.0*.

"*Fumana* was started not as a band but as a project. At the time we both had other commitments. Marco is a record producer. He owns a studio in Bologna. And I was in a band called Modena City Ramblers, which was doing quite well. So we decided to make a record but not commit ourselves to any more than that."

"We also decided that we wanted a female vocalist because it sounds more regional [Emilia Romagnan], which is more renowned for singing women than singing males. We were looking for a young woman with attitude who could take electronic music. So I went to this underground band contest and Fiamma was singing. I go, 'Wow!' She sang like the Devil and Marco and I were totally blown away."

Fiamma Orlandi grew up with her grandmother, who passed on lullabies, traditional songs and old stories. For their debut disc, Marco and Alberto also recruited several friends from a local Irish ceilidh band. And to add a ring of authenticity, they recorded a track with the Choir of Mondine di Novi – a collective of rural agrarian women workers and



Photo: By David Ingram

Fiamma Orlandi

singers who pick rice for a living.

"This choir, most of the women are 80-years-old, they have an energy I have never seen before," says Orlandi. "I think that if you put together women there is such a magical energy that comes out."

Released in North America by Omnium Records, *Fiamma Fumana 1.0*, is a recording that clearly slipped under the radar. A persuasively captivating fusion of electronica, Celtic and Italian roots, it is an absolutely top-drawer recording. As Alberto quickly realised, he could not make a record of such endearing quality and forget about it. Marco, however, was not quite as committed and left his partner to get on with it. Medin, then 17-years-old, took over sampling and programming. And they added classical flute player Jessica Lombardi, who had learned to play the emiliana piva pipes – similar to Scottish bagpipes but with one less drone.

"There are not many people who play this kind of bagpipe," says Jessica. "In the south we have another kind called zampogna and there are a lot of musicians that play it. There is a reason for this: in the south of Italy at Christmas time they always play Christmas songs in the streets with the zampogna. For these people, the piva does not exist. We are only a few people – 20, no more, who play professionally. Like all of the bagpipes, there is something magic inside. It's a fascinating instrument."

So Cotica and Orlandi now had the personnel in place to make *Home* in 2003. And like its predecessor *1.0*, it has all the colour of adventure, warmth, wit and infectious enthusiasm deserving of global infatuation. Traditional music rarely sounds this sexy.

"I would really like to see a traditional song topping the charts," says Roberto. "Fiamma Fumana are a little bit about that. We are trying to do it in Italy where traditional music is not so strong. We are trying for a historical breakthrough. We really believe in the need to keep traditional music fresh by renewing it with the development of taste and technology."



Tunes of Glory

Veterans from the Napoleonic wars were still around when Édouard Richard's grandfather learned some of the fiddle tunes that appear on *Musique Gaspésienne*. Sales of this debut disc released by the 69-year-old Quebec fiddler have been truly overwhelming. "In the end it got so crazy my wife and I had to call a halt to it," he tells Tony Montague.

There's a sparkle in the eye of Édouard Richard on the cover photo of *Musique Gaspésienne*. The spry and bespectacled gent in the white polo-shirt, with fiddle firmly under chin and bow in hand, exudes the confidence and joy of a man who's just released his first album after a lifetime of making music – morning, noon, and night.

"Sometimes I take the violin in my hands when I get up at seven-thirty and my wife's still in bed," says the 69 year-old Richard, on the line from his home in Grande-Vallée, Gaspé – the easternmost

part of Quebec, where the St Lawrence meets the Atlantic and the Appalachians roll to an end. "I play it before lunch, in the afternoon, and in the evening before going to bed."

The CD's sleeve notes contain another photo of Ti-Douard [Little Eddy] and his inseparable instrument. It shows a dapper 12 year-old in suit and tie, his dark hair slicked back. Beside him stands his grandfather Joseph Richard, "grandpère Jo", also playing a fiddle.

Ti-Douard lives in the same house where as a boy he sat for hours on the staircase listening intently to the old man as he practiced in the parlour. That's how Richard learned tunes like the jaunty reel *Spandy*, one of the 18 tracks on *Musique Gaspésienne*. "One morning I said 'Granddad, your tune. I've got it down. He said 'Well, go and play it for me.' So I did, then he said 'Son, you're becoming better than I am'. Yes indeed. Like me he was always playing. He played until three days before he died, in 1953, at the age of 84 years and six months."

On the album Richard ends *Spandy* with the words: "Little child of God in his goodness that's old, old, old. Who came out with that I don't know. I know that grand-dad played it and Père Didier too, Didier Lebreux. But where they fetched it up, we'll never know. It's much too old that one."

A fisherman by trade, Grand-père Jo was born in the late 1860s. Veterans from the War of 1812 and the Battle of Waterloo were still around when he learned many of the fiddle tunes his grandson now plays. That's the breadth of cultural history you can hear on *Musique Gaspésienne*.

"Grand-dad tapped with his feet to accompany his pieces, like someone clogging," recalls Richard, speaking in French with the strong, twangy accent of Gaspé – his words delivered at a clip, and with many endings dropped or elided. "There were other fiddlers who tapped, but not like him. His way was more uplifting, and I do exactly the same."

Richard started playing fiddle when he was six years old, and within a couple of years he was performing for dance evenings, known in Quebec as 'veillées'. "My father came with me because I was too young," Richard remembers. "Veillées happened a lot – during the Christmas season, on weekends, Saturday nights, and on Sundays. They were in fashion at that time, and took place in private houses. And there were parties, marriages, baptisms, and midnight mass – grand-dad played one tune when people went into church, and another one when they left. He composed them himself."

A couple of Grand-père Jo's pieces are featured on *Musique Gaspésienne*, along with a pair by Ti-Douard. The rest are traditional tunes, almost all of them reels. Some, like *Reel à Sophie*, *Reel à Georges*, and *Grosse Roche* have a similar feel to Irish reels but with the characteristic Québécois ring and swing to them. Others, like *Le Baillard*, which Richard learned from the brilliantly-named Moïse Huit de Cloridorme |Moses Eight of

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Photo By: Sophie Riopel

Édouard Richard

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Cloridorme], sound more homegrown, with distant echoes from France. Richard plays them all fluently, strongly, and without ornamentation.

The album was recorded and mixed by Éric Beaudry in 2000, a couple of years before he joined La Bottine Souriante. "One Sunday afternoon Eric came here and asked me to play for him," Richard recalls. "Then he said 'Monsieur Richard, I love your music and I'd like to make an album of it. Then he brought down all his recording equipment from Joliette [north of Montreal] and set it up in my living-room. I played for 18 hours in all, then he shut the thing of. I asked if he had enough, and he laughed and said 'Yes, for at least three albums'."

Beaudry subsequently provided tasteful accompaniment to most of the tunes, with his own guitar and occasionally the bouzouki. On several tracks he added the fiddles of Simon Riopel, Claude Méthé, and Stéphanie Lépine. The album was released on Quebec's Minuit dans La Cuisine label, and had its launch in the parish hall of Grande-Vallée.

"The place was bursting with people," Richard recalls. "There was only room for 400 people but many more than that came. They came in one by one, they bought CDs, and they left to make room for others, and kept coming back – all evening long. We sold 1200 albums then, and we've mailed them out, my friend. I can't tell you how many. In the end it got so crazy my wife and I had to call a halt to it."

Richard has rarely played outside of the Gaspé region but, in the wake of his album's acclaim, the organizers of the Fiddle Tunes summer camp in Port Townsend, Washington, invited him to teach there two years ago. "I spent 10 days there in all," recalls Richard. "We were 395 fiddle-players. I had a translator, and gave classes for an hour-and-a-half in the morning, to 37 students."

"In the evening people came to the house where I was billeted, it it became filled to bursting-point," he continues. "We played together and people danced squares until two-thirty or three in the morning. Last summer I played in Joliette [at the Mémoire et Racine festival] with Eric Beaudry and the others from the record. We had terrific fun. I sold more CDs there than anyone else."

There's another photo of a young fiddle-player in the notes to *Musique Gaspésienne*, just beneath the track listings.

The musician is Richard's grand-daughter Marie-Pier, five years old at the time. "I bought her a little violin for \$125," says Richard. "She's also started playing a little guitar I got her. She comes here and accompanies me. Her mother, my daughter Nicole, plays guitar, fiddle, piano, and mandolin, and tap-dances to reels. She's the best accompanist around. One of my boys, Sylvio, plays guitar too. He's coming here tonight from Sherbrooke with his wife and we're going to play music, tomorrow as well."

Once Ti-Doudard Richard has his fiddle in hand there's no stopping him. After all, he's got a long family tradition to keep up, and to hand on.



Malagasy Soul

Ottawa engineer Sean Whittaker went to Madagascar to build windmills. He wound up making one of the Top-50 African records of all time. It wasn't easy. One musician was prone to spirit possession while another took frequent breaks to feed his chickens. Pat Langston has a word with the man touted to become the next Ry Cooder

In Madagascar, some rustlers play music while they're plying their trade. Seems that these particular tunes temporarily paralyze cattle herders, making the thieves' job a breeze. The problem is, in a country buffeted by western influences, traditional music, paralytic or not, is on the endangered list.

Sean Whittaker, an Ottawa mechanical engineer, is explaining why he decided to produce an album of traditionally based Malagasy music, *Introducing Vakoka*, despite never having set foot in a recording studio in his life.

Over a steaming mug and a brownie at a Bridgehead fair trade coffee shop, the lanky, en-

thusiastic 36-year-old says that he was smitten by the music he heard in villages and the countryside while volunteering on a windmill project in Madagascar from 1993 to 1998.

"Whenever they played, there was this ability to communicate an image or emotion," says Whittaker, contrasting it with the often-manipulative world of pop music. "There's something about music that's raw that communicates across cultural lines, and you know you've really found the real deal."

Hooked, in early 2003 Whittaker took a six-month sabbatical from his job with an Ottawa-based energy and climate change research firm and returned to Madagascar to explore the music.

What he discovered was a country which, despite the international success of such Malagasy roots acts as Tarika and Jaojoby, was largely uninterested in its own musical heritage. It was a country where national treasures like woodwind player Seta Ramaroson, who figured largely in both the music and production of *Introducing Vakoka*, performed for aerobics classes because even Antananarivo, the nation's capital, offered not a single venue dedicated to traditional music.

Whittaker's response was to organize bi-weekly gigs for a few of the country's roots musicians at Grill de Roza in the capital city.

"It started in a selfish way, because I just wanted to hear the music," says Whittaker, himself a bass player in an Ottawa band. "That first show, I just sat and stared – it was so evocative and emotional – and the Malagasy just thought it was a blast. The first show, we had about ten people. Then a journalist started writing about it in the national paper and musicians just started dropping in. By the fourth show, it was packed."

The spot became a "sort of focal point for these musicians," continues Whittaker, and at some point along the way the idea of making an album emerged.

The result has been nothing less than spectacular. Recorded over a three-week period using \$20,000 of his own, borrowed and donated money, Whittaker saw *Introducing Vakoka* (tradition in



Sean Whittaker

Malagasy) scooped up this past January by World Music Network, a London-based imprint which releases records under the Rough Guide and Riverboat labels.

Since its international release earlier this summer, the album has been ranked by Songlines UK as one of the top 50 African albums ever made, wound up on the fRoots Playlist, had AfroPop Worldwide exclaiming, "Sean Whittaker is poised to be the next Ry Cooder..." and been the subject of a BBC documentary.

Whittaker says he had no idea that the project, the profits of which are slated for the Madagascar Cultural Archive Project, would garner such attention.

"It just became its own entity and started walking around and getting all these reviews. It just kills me that there's someone in Indiana or Georgia listening to Monja (one of the thirteen artists on the album) whose never even recorded before and had this really hard life."

The music those imaginary folks in Indiana and Georgia are listening to is a glorious mélange of Madagascar's diverse musical traditions, where Arabian and

African influences blend happily with the music of the Indian, European and Asian immigrants who have settled on the island (the fourth largest in the world) over the years. Instruments on the dozen tracks, all of which are original although traditionally-inspired, range from the langoro (Malagasy drum) and marovany (box zither) to guitar, while the arrangements one minute have traces of Ladysmith Black Mambazo and the next slip into a jazz motif.

"Still," says Whittaker, "we wanted a thread, to be able to listen to the album and hear a continuity. I can hear it. It's fanahy Gasy (Malagasy soul)." That soul, "and no synthesizers or drums!" two of the most pernicious western influences on Malagasy music, were the only conditions Whittaker set down for the musicians.



Dame Ihaova



Jenny Whiteley

Knowing that Malagasy traditional musicians, as do so many others, regularly dilute their music when foreigners appear, Whittaker recruited two of the performers – Seta Ramaroson and Hanitra Rasoaivo, Tarika's front lady – as the project's artistic directors.

"I didn't want to interfere with the music, just let it happen like Rova. I just wanted to see what would happen if we put these folks together and gave them time and space."

Whittaker corralled the musicians for a three-week period during which they worked together in multiple combinations, writing and rehearsing their tracks. The challenges were, well, different: normally never playing a song the same way twice, many of the musicians were strangers to arranging music; the sound engineer vanished for days on end; one artist was prone to spirit possession while another took frequent breaks to zip home and feed his chickens.

On the other hand, says Whittaker with a grin, "I didn't know how you're supposed to make an album," so he just took it all in stride.

The result, aside from the superb music making, is a remarkably fresh, spontaneous album, its tone set by Gabin, the older statesman of Antandroy music, on the opening track *Salama* (Salama, salama, salama ianareo jiahy: 'Hello and welcome to you all').

And for Sean Whittaker, he says there is an important lesson to be learned from the album about cross-cultural relations.

"Development to me was often people swooping into a place with a mission: 'Oh, they need better rice, they need better water.' It almost runs perpendicular to the way Malagasy society works. It's a very serendipitous place. With this project, I didn't go in there planning to do this. It just sort of happened, but it turned out really well and I almost think it turned out because everyone just let it happen."

Clan Destine

The extended Whiteley family – fathers, uncles, brothers and sisters – have a long and illustrious musical history. Among them, Jenny Whiteley, whose self-titled debut recording won the solo roots Juno in 2001. She has just released the follow-up, Hopetown – a disc already tipped to earn her accolades. "I've never been in prison, but I've been to jail a few times to pick people up," she tells Bob Remington

The muse can come to people in the oddest ways. Take, for instance, the song *Hallelujah*, written by Jenny Whiteley and Fred Eaglesmith on Whiteley's new CD, *Hopetown*. A song about a testifying preacher, the chorus goes: "Hail Mary handshake, Hallelujah haircut, one tail light on a gravel road..."

Whiteley and Eaglesmith never really encountered such a preacher. Rather, the inspiration came when Whiteley misunderstood a mumbling Eaglesmith while on a road trip.

"Fred and I were driving somewhere together and I thought he said 'Hallelujah haircut.' I thought that would be a great line for a song. We ended up writing most of it in the car, on a newspaper, all around the crossword puzzle. When we got where we were going we stopped and pulled out the guitar and finished it."

That was a few years ago when Whiteley and her band regularly opened for Eaglesmith. Today, she has a 2001 Juno Award under her belt for her self-titled solo CD and a new release, *Hopetown*, likely to garner further accolades. Comprised of all originals or co-writes, it shows a prolific songwriting talent from the 30-year-old Ontario singer. A former member of the Toronto-based bluegrass band, Heartbreak Hill, Whiteley is now playing a more ethereal brand of Norah Jones-like acoustic music

with a band that includes her brother and Heartbreak Hill co-founder, Dan Whiteley, an accomplished mandolinist. She also tours as a duet with her husband, Joey Wright. The couple have 15-month-old daughter, raising a third generation of musical Whiteleys.

Jenny and Dan Whiteley grew up surrounded by music, raised in a family of Canadian roots musicians. Their father, Chris Whiteley, and uncle, Ken Whiteley, are five-time Juno nominees as the blues-tinged Whiteley Brothers. Chris also wrote and performed country music his wife, Caitlin Hanford, a member of Quartette and also a Juno nominee. But it took Jenny to actually capture one of the coveted Canadian musical awards for her self-titled debut won the Juno Award for Best Roots & Traditional Recording: Solo in March 2001. "I guess I'm the only Whiteley to have won a Juno," she says. She and Dan were also Juno nominees for the self-titled Heartbreak Hill CD in 1999. Now, with her daughter, Jenny is beginning to understand how she came to be infected by music.

"It's interesting to see what she's growing up into. What we do gives me a window of what I grew up around and realizing what a cool thing it was growing up in a family with dad being a musician. We had music around us a lot. We went to a lot of music shows and festivals were a big part of our summer vacations, which we loved. There were always other kids there and it was a highlight of the summer, the camping trips and festivals. In the house there was always music on. I never realized it wasn't that way in other houses. Joey and I, we have music on all the time."

Being part of a musical family also gave Jenny and Dan a head-start on the realities of making music their careers.

"We were able to skip some of the steps of how to be in the music business. We knew a lot of things innately, so we lucked out not making some of the mistakes. We started out with a bit of an advantage and it gives us a good perspective of what where we want to be in our careers. We are so lucky not to have the 'stars-in-our-eyes' thing. It gives us a more mature outlook on this so-called 'glamorous' lifestyle."

"We're so lucky doing something we really love. That's really the key to happiness in life. It's a good motto in life to live by, to follow your passion, whether it's being a musician and playing guitar and making jewelry. It you're still doing it in your early thirties and loving it, it's a good thing and maybe it's right for you."

Jenny and Dan occasionally played with the family as kids but struck out on their own with Heartbreak Hill. The band hosted a regular Wednesday night jam session at Toronto's Silver Dollar beginning in 1996, called High Lonesome Wednesdays. It's still going, albeit with a new group of musicians. "It's kind of hard to give up a great gig like that and it's a great outlet for that kind of music."

Whiteley's *Hopetown*, which came out at the end of May, isn't bluegrass. It features a diverse blend of songs continuing in the vein of her evocative first solo CD, with styles ranging from rootsy rock to, well,



Mercan Dede

categories be damned. There's a mournful love song, *Burning of Atlanta*, and the engaging *Halls of Folsom*, a song about a man who fears getting out of prison, the only life he has known. Inspirations?

"Well, I've never been in prison, but I've been to jail a few times to pick people up," says Whiteley. "I don't really remember where that one came from. I had heard of that phenomenon, of someone fearful of leaving jail. For people who've spent a long, long time in jail it can be a scary situation, especially if they've gone in real young. I'd never heard a song from that perspective. There's something about a prison song that's haunting and there's that morbid curiosity that we have about things like that. As for choosing *Folsom*, I guess it's a nod to Johnny Cash, but it wasn't a conscious thing."

"*Burning of Atlanta* was pretty personal. I wrote a chorus that was a little too soul-baring for my comfort level. I played it for a few friends and got good response to it, and eventually I changed the words to the chorus so I was comfortable with it. The title? Well, I was watching *Gone with the Wind* and that whole Georgia imagery stayed with me."

"I write two kinds of songs in my mind. One, I get an idea for it and it is instantly formed in my mind. Sometimes the melody is there but it's shadowy. The other kind is more of a concept for a song, and those can take a long time. You write maybe the chorus and get frustrated with it and come back to it six months later. I guess I'm not the kind of songwriter who is very disciplined. I don't force myself to write unless I want to."

"I like ballads. You can tell a story in 20 verses or you can tell it in three. For the longest time, I had to learn to not tell all the details of a story. Sometimes it's what you leave out that's important, and it's a fun point to get to in writing. I always liked Bob Dylan because he hints at what he is writing about and you think you know everything he's trying to say but you're not quite sure."



Turkish Delight

Arkin Allen blends programmed beats with the ney – a type of end-blown reed flute once widespread in the Middle East. It's played by his alter-ego Mercan Dede and accompanied on-stage by visually-stunning whirling dervishes. "We believe music has the power to create a magic," he tells Tony Montague.

Montreal's Arkin Ilicali is a musician with two stage-names, and a whole lot of associated projects. To folk and world music fans he's Mercan Dede (as he prefers to be known), a multi-instrumentalist and producer who travels the globe with dancers and players, blending traditional sounds from his Turkish homeland with ambient electronic grooves. To clubbers he's DJ Arkin Allen, one of the pioneer North American turntablists, spinning tribal and techno beats for the dance floor.

The stage-monikers represent two facets of a subtle and agile artist who's at once rooted in tradition and focused on the future. Dede's aim is to bring together these apparently contrary musical worlds and to break down the barriers that separate individuals, cultures, and religions. To him such divisions are illusory and insignificant.

Ultimately, it's all whirled beat music.

Dede is a Sufi, a follower of the mystical and progressive branch of Islam which has given us, for example, the sublime poetry of the 13th century poet Rumi and the Mevlevi order of ecstatically-spinning dervishes. "Rumi has a saying: 'If you are everywhere you are nowhere; if you are somewhere you are everywhere,'" says Dede. "My somewhere is in my heart. I try to figure it out."

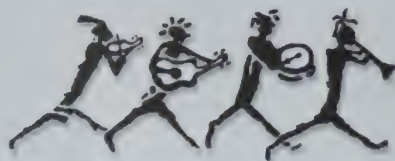
According to Dede his journey of self-discovery began at the age of four or five listening to the radio, he heard a sound that mesmerized him. It was a ney, a type of end-blown reed flute once widespread in Middle Eastern countries from Turkey to

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Iran. But of course Dede had no idea of the source of that breathy, soulful music until many years later when, as a college student in Istanbul, he heard it once more, drifting from the window of a conservatory.

"I was studying journalism, but I was determined to play this instrument. I met a teacher – a goldsmith named Omer Erdodular – who once a week taught ney for free to young people like me. He

was a Sufi, but I didn't know it at the time. I started to learn ney from him and at the same time he was teaching this wonderful essence of Sufism."

At first Dede played a ney that he'd made from plastic tubing. Later his teacher gave him an instrument – as well as tapes of ney music. "That was 20 years ago and I'm still listening to those tapes, still practicing with them. After a year or so he referred me to a very well-known musician who played frame-drums. I started going to his place every Saturday. People would come together, and sing together, cook together, eat together – all those things about sharing, understanding, and listening which are the essence of Sufism. It was a really magical way to learn."

Dede's studies led him to photography, and by a twist of fate his work caught the eye of an official of the Saskatoon Public Library, who invited him to present an exhibition in Canada. Dede wound up taking courses at the University of Saskatchewan, and he worked in a bar to pay his rent. That's where he started deejaying, and Arkin Allen was born – a musical métis, part-Turkish, part-Canadian.

Dede was still not ready to play the ney in public. But after moving to Montreal – to study, then teach, multimedia at Concordia University – his activities as Arkin Allen came to the attention of a small San Francisco-based label, Golden Horn asked Dede to make an album of his new Middle Eastern grooves, on which he played ney.

"At the time [1987], I was reading a book with a character called Mercan Dede in it. I really liked him – he was about 80 years old, a crazy guy doing marvellous things. So I used his name for the album. There were only 500 copies made, but it got very good reviews and I was invited to give a concert in Istanbul."

So it was that Dede began playing ney on stage, backed by the programmed beats of Arkin Allen, as well as percussion and keyboards. He was also increasingly in demand as a record producer. "When I perform I see myself more in that role than as a musician, because I can hear the different sources of sound. I can see different musicians, and I like to bring them together. What I do on stage is more like conducting an orchestra, putting the ideas together."

"I love producing because it gives you a kind of freedom to look at things from outside. Now I start to write for the movies. I work as music director of the Turkish National Modern Dance Group, and so I produce different art works. I think production is the essence of my musical creativity."

Nevertheless, as instrumentalist and band-leader Dede has toured the world, playing at such prestigious events as the Montreal International Jazz

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Festival (before 100,000 revellers on Rue St. Catherine) and the WOMEX music trade fair in Essen, Germany. This year he's played in Turkey – from Istanbul to Erzerum – Amsterdam, Rome, Malta, and throughout North America.

"I'm currently with a new band that has some extremely talented young musicians – the trumpet player is only 15, and there are two percussionists and a master qanun [plucked zither] player. My main target is young people, not only the audience but the musicians. I want to give them the opportunity that I didn't have when I was young."

Dede's music is always accompanied by on-stage dancers. On his current tour he's with whirling dervishes Emina Mira Burke and Ragib Burke.

"What we are doing musically, they are doing with movement and images – it's essential to my performance."

The eclectic Dede also plays "ethnic jazz" with the Blue Man Quartet, and works with several well-known musicians, including Toronto violinist Hugh Marsh and UK-based singer Sushela Rahman, who appears on his next recording. Dede's current

album *Sufi Traveler* is a re-release (as a double CD), of 2001's *Seyahatname* and 2002's *Nar*.

"There's a wonderful Sufi saying: when the words come from your lips, even without reaching another person's ears it's dispersed, lost in translation in a way," Dede continues. "But when it comes from your heart it reaches others directly. We believe music has the power to create a magic. In the past 10 years we've experienced it again and again. Connecting heart to heart makes us all understand we're part of one huge family. It's what I believe sincerely and perhaps naively. And it's in our music."

Labour Days

Consider John Wort Hannam the pick-and-shovel poet of the coal pit. Such tracks as Blue Collar and Cracked Hands on his latest release Dynamite and Dozers clearly defines Hannam's working class upbringing and reflects his prairie roots. Les Pearson compares him to Marty Robbins and Gordon Lightfoot.

Not that a poet or a musician needs affirmation yet it's undeniably gratifying when given. From more than 120 worthy entrants, John Wort Hannam's *Church of the Long Grass* was recently voted the Best Original Song at the inaugural Calgary Folk Festival songwriting competition. Featured on his latest disc, *Dynamite and Dozers*, it indicates a parochial groundswell of appreciation for this talented Alberta songwriter.

His latest release is an 18-wheeler's air horn blast to announce that Hannam is a bigger songwriter than the foothills can contain. With this CD follow-up to *Pocket Full of Holes* (2001), he has earned his journeyman's papers and a wider Canadian and international audience.

For the uninitiated, Hannam was born in the parish of St. Helier on the island of Jersey of the English coast. He immigrated to Calgary as a child and now lives in Fort Macleod, birth place of Joni Mitchell. He likes its simplicity, the absence of traffic lights, and getting anywhere on foot or bicycle. But he is also attracted by: "The idea of the past and the desire for the way things used to be." John Wort Hannam is a nostalgic rugged individualist.

He sees the past reflected in Fort Macleod's historic buildings: "And in the fact that there is one lumber store in town, one theatre, and an outside swimming pool open only in the summer." It reminds him of towns you read about in old stories.

The title track, *Dynamite and Dozers*, implies that prairie town survival is, at best, tenuous. The good old days, when "grain reigned supreme" and the local elevators were the measure of a town's fortunes, have passed. He sings: "Sooner or later, the old elevators all will be coming down." The refrain sears like South Alberta sun.

An affinity for rural communities lies genetically in Hannam's blood. He remembers Jersey, his granddad's farm, and "...a countryside full of dairy cows and potato farmers." Although he is not a farmer himself, Hannam appreciates rural decency. These values, together with a brief family biography, are enshrined in the words of *Cracked Hands*. Although it is the second last cut on the recording, this song captures the songwriter's pride in his own blue-collar roots.

Hannam's grandfather, the song says, taught his son "...a fella should always work as hard as he can." Calluses and cracked hands were marks of manhood and honour. A man is only as good as his work and word.

If today's grandson tilts politically left, the fulcrum may have been his father's disillusionment with these values. Hannam's lyrics depict father asking what it takes for "...a man of my age/To earn what he's worth, make an honest wage." While employers' broken promises and urban recession may have ruptured his father's dreams, John's last-word assessment is that gnarled hands are good cause "to be proud."

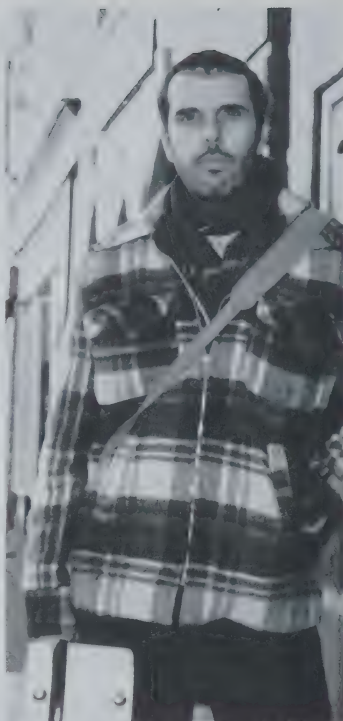
This explains why the new recording begins with a catchy chorus snippet of *Blue Collar* and ends with the full song. The lyrics reverberate with filial pride in hard-working, self-made, men.

"I have a real pride in my lower-income upbringing," says Hanna. "Pride in the sense that although there was not much money in the house when I was a kid, it was not for lack of working hard on my mother and father's part and I am very proud of them for that."

This sentiment defines the songwriter and his recording as clearly as an Edwards-Kerry convention speech.

As John Wort Hannam watched his parents' labour, he gained "a real appreciation for the working class and especially those blue collar workers who work with their hands."

Two cuts, *Above Ground* and *Eddy Fitzgerald*, establish him as the pick-and-shovel poet of the coal pit. *Above Ground* captures the boom and



John Wort Hannam

bust cycle of all resource towns. Rollicking banjo licks trumpet the mine opening, but sound a tinny knell for the twenty-eight bodies recovered from an underground disaster. The story line leaves little doubt that "...every day's a good day when it's above ground."

This theme is repeated in *Eddy Fitzgerald*. The song's persona is a feisty coal miner dying of black lung but denied support from workers comp. Again, instrumental accompaniment sets the story's mood. Violin and accordion swell the poignant chorus of "...it's a hard luck life son indeed/When it's a hard rock miner's life you lead." The scansion may be rough and ready, but the sentiment is solid and sharp.

Do not mistake this songwriter's focus on the plain, pedestrian, and proletarian for narrow vision. John Wort Hannam's sharp eye and keen ear can be seen in the universality of his themes and his thoughtful, even profound, understanding of the human spirit under boiler pressure.

There are the men (*50 Miles*) and women (*Dickson's Slough*) driven apart by hard times. But there is also triumph in the midst of this poverty. Witness *The Ballad of Nelly and Joe*, the two tramps who toast their marriage with a bottle of beer found in the park, "a gift from the gods."

Dynamite and Dozers highlights Hannam's storytelling skills. There is an echo of Marty Robbins in *Annabelle*. And then there is the gritty story of Nick, the local mechanic who takes broken engines – and a

lady—and gives them back fixed. *Three Cylinders* is a classic worthy of Lightfoot.

Hannam's other great gift is melody. His tunes will rumble in your brain like heavy haulers. They dig in and will not let go. They are much of the traction accounting for his newfound fame.

Where does he go from here? John Wort Hannam is clear. While he would like to tour in Canada, the USA, and abroad on a continuous basis, his ambitions are simple.

"At this moment I am simply trying hard to be a working musician and pay the bills by performing my songs."

It's honest work. Could he ask for more?



An Enduring Legacy

In an ongoing effort to publicise important people and events in Canadian folk music history, Penguin Eggs assigned Doug McArthur to interview Estelle Klein last winter. Little did we know at the time of her tragic illness. Here Doug pays tribute to a woman who pioneered the format for folk festivals in this country.

When news of Estelle's passing circulated through the Canadian folk music community, it provoked an outpouring of personal stories on the Internet that showed her influence on the formative years of artistic directors, performers and festival organizers all across the country.

At first I found a similarity in these tales that I thought was almost beside the point but I have come to realize that it is just these personal remembrances that constitute the real legacy of Estelle Klein.

Peter Rowan, the renowned guitarist, used to have a telling line about Bluegrass Music. He would say that no matter where you started with it you ended up traveling through a long tunnel and at the end of that tunnel was the smiling face of Bill Monroe.

Sometimes it seems that when you begin to study the structures of Canadian folk music you inevitably end up looking at the face of Estelle Klein.

Artistic directors all over Canada have credited Estelle with creating the model for what we generally accept in this country as the proto folk festival. That is a series of workshops—themed mini concerts in the afternoon and a main stage concert show in the evening. In fact, Estelle's ideas developed beyond this model during her last years as artistic director at Mariposa into a more egalitarian concept with less emphasis on the concert idea. Quality performers were placed on a much more level playing field in the last years of Estelle's Mariposa with performance values outweighing star power. Some of these ideas have receded in the festivals that exist today and perhaps deserve to be revisited.

We may still have much to learn from Estelle.

The Ontario Council of Folk Festivals has established its highest award in her name (Estelle Klein Lifetime Achievement Award) to honour individuals who have made exceptional contributions to Canadian Folk Music, her amazing ArtsCan Circle

Photo: © 2001 Andrew Strauss



Estelle Klein

project almost seems to be the one ray of hope in this country's long and troubled relationship with the north's First Peoples, her early Mariposa festivals at Innis Lake and Toronto Island were the core experience for many of the life long supporters of Canadian music.

So since the '60s in Orillia at the early Mariposa, somehow, Estelle Klein has been recognized and deferred to as an expert in the noisy, argumentative world of Canadian folk music. I wondered how that happened.

I visited Estelle in her bright and pleasant home in a residential area of Picton—way down on the long peninsula that juts into Eastern Lake Ontario near Kingston. Her walls are covered with bright paintings. Messages were stacked by her phone and computer. The phone rang a lot with calls from all over the country. There aren't a lot of mementoes from her past displayed. Estelle lived very much in the present.

I asked her to account for her early ability to identify the best and most potent of folk performers.

"I don't really know," she replied.

She seemed to me to be amazed at her own ability to get to the heart of a performance or an event. She was possessed of an unshakable sense of rightness—an ingrained notion of quality that she could not define but formed the cornerstone of her endeavours.

Estelle credited her own curiosity and an autodidactic ability to absorb interesting material.

Though her father worked in vaudeville as a "candy butcher" Estelle went to great lengths to clarify that her eclectic interests seemed to spring up separate and without parental input.

Paul Robeson, Cab Calloway, Artie Shaw, the Weavers and Shakespeare were the muses of her youthful excursions in Toronto to concerts and

presentations by the United Jewish People's Order. Estelle enjoyed Art Songs and Burl Ives.

"I preferred Dinah Washington to Billie Holiday".

Estelle displayed an early strong social conscience. Again, she felt this thread seemed to spring up on its own, regardless of the prevailing leftist ideals swirling around her. She never doubted her ideas on equality and fairness as well as her instant recognition of talent in whatever discipline.

Estelle's sense of injustice and appreciation of art found an expression first in the Toronto Guild of Canadian Folk Artists, a group formed to represent the underpaid and overworked performers in the Yorkville Village—then a part of Toronto far removed from today's Starbucks and Gucci encrusted shopping heaven.

The music clubs lined the streets at that time and folk music was the preferred flavour of patrons. Many performers played set after set for small wages but big fun and a true listening audience. It was a lifestyle choice for performers, but one that left them open to the machinations of anyone attempting to cash in on the *Great Folk Music Scare*.

This early work placed her as a logical choice for consultation on the new Mariposa Festival debuting in Orillia.

Mariposa grew and moved to Toronto Island and there in the shadow of the huge skyscrapers, just across a busy lagoon from the churning turmoil of the city, folk fans crowded onto the white ferries that turned the shining walls of Bay Street into nothing more than an abstract theatrical set for mountain music and songs of social justice.

Early on Estelle also exhibited an avid interest in other cultures and this can be most noticeably traced through her early championing of Native American performers at Mariposa through to the ArtsCan Circle ideas.

She did not, actually, seem to be much interested

in her storied past, preferring always to bring the conversation around to her current projects. It was probably always like that for her. Old disagreements would float to the top of her conversations then evaporate as she leaned instead into some new enthusiasm.

After impromptu unscheduled visits to the island festival by Dylan, Jackson Browne and Joni Mitchell in the early '70s some blamed Estelle for the somewhat panicky reaction by Mariposa staff (Dylan and others were asked to leave the island after fans intent on following their heroes disrupted the programming).

"It wasn't me - I was on vacation in Greece," says Estelle. Even when she wasn't present the prevailing criteria seemed to be how Estelle would handle this.

So, like everyone else who was changed forever by early visits to Mariposa, here is my confession:

For me it was a teen aged hitch hiking marathon from Goderich to Innis Lake (and back the same night) that saw me sitting at the feet of Joni Anderson (Mitchell) and Doc Watson. I was stunned

by the quantity and quality of the musicians I saw that day, but the one organizer's name that I also came away with was Estelle Klein.

Later years found me sleeping under the off ramp of the Queen Elizabeth Way after being turfed by Mariposa security from my ill-chosen illegal camp ground on Toronto Island.

But I saw Howlin' Wolf and Steve Gillette and Joni in all her power and beauty against a shimmering purple backdrop and Doug Kershaw and Taj Mahal and so many others.

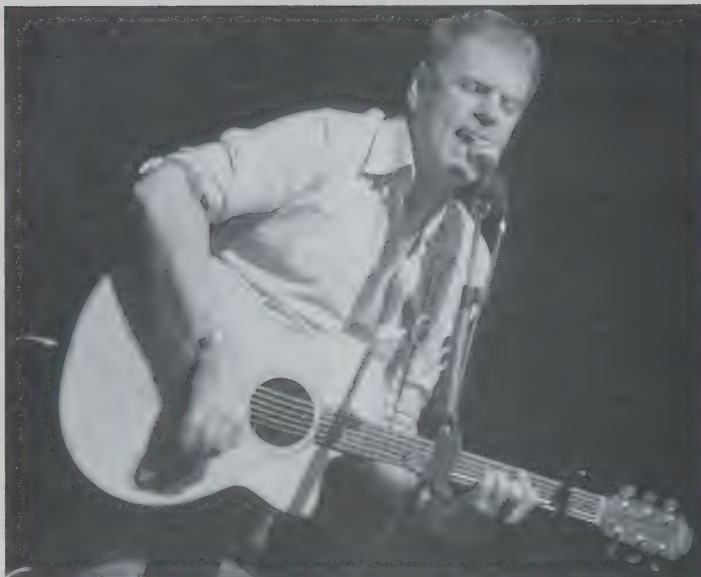
At the 30th anniversary of Mariposa in Barrie I actually made the lineup though Estelle was long gone at that point. All I could think of as I flashed my backstage pass at Security was the long ago escorted ejection from the lovely island.

As an artistic director (Eaglewood Festival) and as Co-chair of the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals, I hope I build upon the foundation of Estelle's vision. I also hope the next generation of Artistic Directors and promoters realizes how far they have to go to keep the quality level of presentation that has been set in this country.

If there is, in fact, a Canadian folk community that amounts to more than just the sum of its parts; if we are all not just traveling in isolation on this amazing songline; if we are not to be just a low-rent end of the great star making machinery of song, we must learn where we have been and who got us here.

Estelle Klein was and remains the single most influential icon for such a community. She is lovingly remembered by family, friends, fans, associates and a whole bunch of people who never even met her.

Donations in Estelle's memory may be made to The ArtsCan Circle (cheques payable to: The Agora Foundation in Trust for The ArtsCan Circle), 1360 Lakeshore Road, Scornia, Ontario, N7S 2M1.



Martyn Joseph

Reason To Believe

Martyn Joseph has led a chequered career. What with loitering with the current queen of Las Vegas and getting kicked off a Shirley Bassie tour for wearing jeans. No wonder he found refuge on the folk festival circuit. Like Bruce Cockburn, Joseph's songs spring from a deep faith. "The word 'Christian' seems to embrace so much nonsense these days - the right wing moral majority, that's not me," he tells Roddy Campbell.

A composed and very deliberate anger rises with each passing verse. By the song's conclusion, the intensity of the performance leaves the audience emotionally drained yet clamouring for more - another open sore of injustice to redress. So much passion. So much dignity.

And to think a mere decade ago Mr. Blobby kept Martyn Joseph out of the British Top 40. If David Bowie had canceled, Joseph would have been on the big-time BBC TV show Top of The Pops. And do you want to know something else? Of course you do. . . he toured with Celine Dion.

"I've done a lot of those things. But that was ten years ago. I think I'm more radical now in what I sing," says Joseph, early Sunday morning at the recent Edmonton Folk Music Festival. "The only time I found out that it wasn't my crowd was opening for Shirley Bassie. I got kicked off after four nights for wearing jeans on stage. An audience that had come to hear Hey, Big Spender was not interested in songs about laid-off coal miners.

"But I have always found that no matter what audience I was in front of, whether it was middle class, working class or whatever, I could get in and hook them and have something to say. I still have people

come to my shows in the UK who say, 'The first time we saw you was when you were with Celine Dion and we loved it.' So, it worked. But at face value you would think it a strange pairing."

Not half. Martyn Joseph's songs truly are about unemployed coal miners (*Please Sir*). They are also about single parents (*Working Mother*) and lonely, terrified young soldiers (*Swansea*). And once in a while he will even dip into Welsh history to highlight some grave past wrong (*Dic Penderyn*).

As topical as his songs surely are, Joseph, like his hero Bruce Cockburn, frequently approaches issues from a humanitarian perspective rather than political. Largely, it stems from his religious experiences growing up in Wales. Initially, he joined a Baptist church so he could play for its football team. But he grew evangelical, almost fundamentalist. Naturally enough, his first songs were about faith. And he became quite well known in the relatively small contemporary Christian music scene in the U.K.

"Then I started to travel to the Third World. I sat there with folks in suffering situations. Having sat in a slum in Brazil or a refugee camp on the Cambodian border, I came home realizing my songs were just too simplistic and thought, 'I just can't sing this stuff anymore'.

"There was also the bigger question: 'Do you still believe this [religious] stuff?' And it was a question really of what I had to leave behind and what could I still carry forward. I don't really go to church now. But I did find common ground with the Man upstairs, as it were. The problem for me and other artists like Bruce Cockburn or even Bono [of U2] is how do you articulate belief. Because the word 'Christian' seems to embrace so much nonsense these days - the right wing moral majority, that's not me. But I still have the tenants of belief. I can use 'Christian' to a friend, and I can

use it in this context, but I just don't think it's that useful to express what I actually feel in my heart."

When Joseph's songs began to ask questions rather than provide simplistic answers, it provoked a backlash from his former fans. And at one point he considered giving up singing entirely. But his new songs developed an audience of their own and in 1991 he signed with Sony Music in the U.K. Throughout the next five years, he had several hit singles – *Dolphin's Make Me Cry*, *Please Sir* and *We'll Talk About It In the Morning*, among them. The latter peaked at No. 41 in 1995, while the children's entertainer, Mr. Blobby, was No. 1.

"Getting played on the radio had a huge effect. I suddenly crossed over from this guy who came from a sort of spiritual background, and then was singing to people in all sorts of places and doing these tours with Celine and Joan Armatrading, Art Garfunkel, Chris DeBurgh, and all these sorts of people."

Joseph also formed an alliance with Tom Robinson – he of 2.4.6.8. *Motorway* and *Glad To Be Gay* hits – and Steve Knightly from the folk group Show of Hands. They would tour under the banner Faith, Folk and Anarchy and record a live double disc before knocking it on the head last March. They do, however, perform a live version of Robinson's *War Baby* on Joseph's wonderfully moving five-track benefit EP, *The Great American Novel*. Proceeds from it go to War Child – a U.K.-based charity that helps children in war-ravaged countries.

For all that though, Joseph's career took a turn into left-field one fateful day in 1998. He logged on to a Bruce Cockburn chatline and received a note from Jo Beattie in Prince George, B.C.

"I e-mailed him asking, 'Was he Martyn Joseph from Wales, by chance?' And if he was, had he been to Canada? And if not, would he come and I could help him," says Jo, who was then familiar with Martyn's music and now runs the Prince George Folkfest. "At the time I was having a problem with my server and no reply came. Some weeks later the mail arrived with a letter from Martyn and the rest is history."

Jo Beattie set up a thirteen-venue tour in northern B.C. in the spring of 1999 and wound up as Joseph's agent. That tour led to gigs at prestigious folk festivals across the country. Word had, obviously, spread quickly.

"It has been an absolute blessing," says Martyn. "I get to come to this incredible, beautiful place. I have my audience in the UK and I work at my own record label and everything. But it was great to get this and do all these different sort of gigs and hear all these different musicians. It is like a new chapter opening up in Canada. I've not known a great deal about the folk tradition, other than people like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. I wasn't aware of the contemporary folk artists, I mean coming here I've discovered these people and it is wonderful."

"The first folk festival I ever played in my life was the Vancouver folk festival. If you go to the UK and go into an HMV, you'll find me in the rock or pop section. They don't see me as folk. The folk festivals there see me as mainstream. I don't care; I just play. The connection with Steve



Kevin Breit

has certainly brought me recognition with the Show of Hands fans, and it's opened me up a little bit to the folk world in the U.K. So it's just interesting how you make these connections and find a new audience."

No discrepancies here, though. Jack Schuler at Festival Distribution in Vancouver makes sure of that. His label Jericho Beach Music just released Joseph's first studio recording since 1999, *Whoever It Was That Brought Me Here Will Have To Take Me Home*. It is a clear and understated reaffirmation of the class and conviction that Joseph brings to his work. Four of the songs are co-writes with poet Stewart Henderson and deal with social and moral issues as well as pay tribute to women (*This Being Woman*) and the principles of Martin Luther King Jr (*Just Like The Man Said*). The rather lumbering title came from a line in a poem by the 13th century Arabian poet Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi. It's a song Joseph describes as "a cry of despair."

"I do not have answers to the majority of my questions. At the end of most days my hands are sort of thrown up in despair I just thought *Whoever It Was That Brought Me*... kind of summed up for me how I feel right now at the age of 44. You expect as you journey through life you would get more wisdom, or whatever, collectively. I just seem to gather more contradictions all the time."

"I don't really like singing about myself too much. Although, the new album is a little more introspective because I'd done a lot of political stuff with War Child. Primarily, I'm interested in telling the story. That's what folk music does – it's music about people. So you read a book or you see a newspaper, and you try to climb inside the heart of someone and articulate their world if you possibly can."



A look on the Breit Side

Kevin Breit appears on recordings by some of the most well known names in pop music. And yet he also makes incredible roots records – *Jubilee* with Harry Manx a case in point. Ditto, the cosmic blues of the Toronto-based guitarist's latest project, *John and the Sisters*. "I am into Levon Helm. I mean I love him," he tells Tom Metzgers.

Like it or not, Kevin Breit has made his name as the tasteful soother; the guitar player slipping delicious, melodic runs throughout well received cocktail pop. Think Norah Jones, Cassandra Wilson or Celine Dion and you might be humming a Breit-inspired lick. That guitar in Norah Jones' *Humble Me*? Breit. Crazy banjo picking from *Skedaddle*? Yup, its Breit.

It stands to reason that it's a sound that the man has nurtured and actively seeks. But exploring the musical output of 41-year-old Kevin Breit is like diving into the deep-end of an Olympic-sized pool. It's deeper and longer than you think and certainly not as blue as you might expect.

A scan of his recent output reveals a lot. If it has strings, he's probably played it. An inspired acoustic duo release (*Jubilee*), a scrambled insane banjo-based pick-a-thon (*Folk Alarm*), a jazzy, live DVD with his band, *Sisters Euclid*, and what many are calling the best track from Norah Jones' top-selling CD (*Humble Me*). The most recent blast is the bar-room blues album *John and the Sisters* or as the label NorthernBlues bills it: "crazy burning cosmic blues from another planet." The tall guitar player is not short of ideas.

The birth of the raucous *John and the Sisters* exemplifies the freestyle churning of ideas inside Breit's head and his desire for new audiences. On the road with Norah Jones, playing to packed houses, Breit



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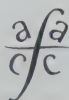
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was missing his band the Sisters Euclid. "I was totally into doing the Norah show, which is laidback," said Breit, one summer morning from his home. "But I missed rocking out. That's when I starting thinking about doing another Sisters record."

The Sisters Euclid have released five CDs along with a DVD. Usually released through independent channels, they receive little attention beyond College St.

Inspired by the craving for more ears, he realized help must be enlisted. "I wanted more people to hear this new record. Which meant I would have to sign a record deal. Since I had done the *Jubilee* record with Harry Manx at NorthernBlues, I started thinking that recording a blues album could be a start in finding a wider audience, a stepping stone. I thought of my friend (blues singer) John Dickie and even came up with the name John and his Sisters and pitched the whole idea to Fred Litwin (owner of NorthernBlues) that same night."

Breit found a recording contract waiting for him when he returned home to Elora, Ontario, on a break from the "Norah show". Minor problem: he hadn't spoken to the guy whose name was on the contract, John Dickie. In fact, he hadn't spoken to Dickie in about a year.

It didn't take long for the creative sparks to fly. Phone calls and meetings were quickly replaced by writing sessions and jams. The adrenaline that creativity launches surged through the two, ending up with close to 20 songs after a couple of weeks. The actual recording of the album with the Sisters took three days, most songs finished on their first or second takes. The songs on *John and the Sisters* are fun, lively and capture people enjoying the creation of music.

Breit's love of the creative process shines through when the subject of musical inspiration and idols comes up.

"I am into Levon Helm. I mean I love him. I think he is amazing," he says. "The Band was such a great band. *The Last Waltz* will make you cry, he was so good. Every thing he does in that movie is great. You just see the sincerity in Levon and the sincerity of Robbie (Robertson). I read Levon's book, but I didn't really have to read the book, you could just see it. A bunch of guys that were in a band that wanted to play forever. And you had one guy who was pulling to go to Hollywood and become what he is now, which is an A&R man. And you got Levon who is still playing. Levon and Garth. Still playing, making you dance."

On *Skeddaddle*, the brilliant *Folk Alarm* disc, leads off with a track titled *Levon Helm*. Sadly, although



Photo By: Fumie Suzuki

Gheorghe Covaci, Wayne Adams, Geoff Berner and Diona Davies

Helm played on a Norah Jones track, it was the one day that Breit was not in the studio. And so he never heard that song.

"*Skeddaddle* is about him and Audrey Hepburn. I had a dream that they got married and that I was at the wedding. The wedding was in a pawn shop. I began to think what kind of music would I hear at their wedding? Three songs came immediately to me (*Pawn Shop Wedding Song*, *Audrey Hepburn and Levon Helm*). That was *Skeddaddle*."

"To be creative is the most important thing. I love to play live. I would love the Sisters to play more, but, I mean, just to be creative. I wonder how many records you can put out before people stop buying them? With the Sisters, I just want to get it out there."

As he talks about his plans for his Sisters and his busy schedule, one can't forget probably the most shocking move for fans of Kevin Breit: Leaving a major recording star at her commercial peak. He maintains the decision was always the right one.

"Musically, it was hard to move away from Norah and the band. It was a real family and I felt my contribution there. But really, I had no choice. I was doing it for me. I wanted to be around my children and my wife. I wanted to see them grow up, 'cause I had been missing it for about five years. I had been on the road almost non-stop. I figured I had to take a year off and be with them. That was an easy decision. Still, some days it was hard. I remember getting up in the morning, and seeing everyone's itinerary on my computer. I could see they were performing in Dublin and there I was waking up in Ontario. I miss the playing, 'cause I love playing and I would say 'right now I would be on stage'. But the greater love was being with my kids... and I need that."

Maybe now he'll make a bit of time for a swim in that pool.



Klezmer Uncovered

Vancouver accordionist and band leader Geoff Berner spent last spring in Romania looking for the last of the old Jewish and Gypsy klezmer musicians. Despite the ravages of Palinka – an apple-derived liquor which shakes your brains like an industrial mixer – he found them. This is his wonderful travelogue – dirt and all.

I'm Geoff Berner. I play accordion and sing the strange songs I write. In the past few years I've been listening and writing more and more in the style of klezmer – the folk music of eastern European Jews. I'm a Jew, and all my family came from eastern Europe.

I've been planning for some time to immerse my recordings more in this style. So it just made sense for me to go to the source. So that's what I did. I tricked my band, the violinist Diona Davies and the drummer Wayne Adams, into coming along.

For several weeks we travelled around rural Romania, looking for the roots and remnants of klezmer music. And we found them. Every day, we would wake up in whatever small village we'd passed out in, have some coffee, and go out to "See who's not dead yet", as our guide, Bob Cohen would say.

Bob is the leader of my favourite klezmer band, De Naye Kapelye. He speaks several dialects of Romany (Gypsy—these guys generally refer to themselves as Gypsy), Romanian (which is entirely different), Hungarian, Yiddish, Zulu, and several other languages, including Brooklynese. What Bob does is, he goes around and finds the old men who used to play in the pre-war klezmer bands. He interviews them, and records them playing. Then he uses his research for his band, which is as authentic a recreation of a Romanian Jewish wedding in 1938 as you're ever going to get. And he plays with real

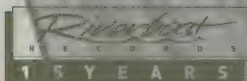
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Mory Kanté

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...like similar recent albums by Youssou N'Dour and Baaba Maal that also turned their backs on Western influences, it's a cracker... Once upon a time, the singer was able to usurp the great Salif Keita as lead singer with Bamako's Super Rail Band, at last we get to discover why.' *Mojo*



'There's a great sense of rhythm and energy and dance to these tracks... It's tremendous.'

Robin Denselow, *BBC Radio*

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RENÉ LACAILLE: MAPOU

René Lacaille is the musical embodiment of the unique Creole culture of the Indian Ocean island of La Réunion that incorporates African, Indian, Madagascan and European rhythms and instruments. On the album **Mapou**, this remarkable singer, accordion player, guitarist and oracle tells the story of his troubadour life, reflecting the evolution of the music of La Réunion and features among others the fascinating styles of *séga* and *maloya*.

'Mapou finds the gravel-voiced troubadour in rumbustious form, swinging between rum soaked chansons and thumping singalongs' *Observer (UK)*



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guts, which I love.

With only one exception, the only players left from the old bands are Gypsies. Those Jews who managed to survive the Holocaust generally left Romania as soon as possible after the fall of the Dictator Ceaucescu in 1990. The old klezmer bands were ethnically mixed—Jewish bandleaders would fill out the line-up with Gypsy players. And some of those fellows are still alive and still playing.

We spent a lot of time in the Maramures region, which, because of its isolation, and the fierce independence of the people who live there, still has a real living folk tradition. People don't generally drive cars in Maramures. They ride in horse-drawn carts. They get water from a well in the back yard. The roads are unpaved. There's no indoor plumbing. Many people still wear traditional peasant dress, all the time. And everybody seems to have their own still, which they use to brew Palinka, an apple-derived liquor which is clear, pure and shakes your brains around in your head like an industrial mixer. So visiting Maramures is like going back into the past, really drunk.

Each day, we'd go out looking for old Gypsy men. We'd arrive in the village, order a beer at the bar, and then Bob would ask around to see if the old guy he was looking for was at home. We heard the most common response so many times that Diona, Wayne and I quickly learned the Romanian phrase: "Il Mourit." He died. These are old guys. But sometimes we'd find them. And some of them were astonishing players. We have the minidisc recordings to prove it.

My favourite was George "Johnny" Covaci, who plays in a band called Iza. Johnny's 78 years old. He

It sometimes seems that in folk music, there's a tendency to wash the dirt out of a particular music, to make it respectable, or acceptable, or some bullshit. In my future recordings, I intend to cram as much of it back in as I can. — Geoff Berner

plays like nobody I've ever heard before. I can't describe it. He has the chops of a classically trained virtuoso, but he can also GRIND out the roughest-sounding shit imaginable. After he played, I tried to tell him that I thought his music was unbelievable, astounding, beautiful. "Forte forte frumose". He took the compliment in stride, informing me that he was the "Paginini of Maramures". Other players were obviously jealous of him, because when we mentioned his name elsewhere, the response was always a pitying sigh and a tap of the ear. "Oh, that poor guy—he was good, but unfortunately, now he's deaf. Can't play at all." Johnny, like several other guys we found, played with the old Sugaraini klezmer band, back in the late 30s and early 40s. Apparently, the outfit was a band/circus of several brothers, some or all of whom were dwarfs. No, really. They really were.

We also visited the last Jewish klezmer player in Romania. That's no mean feat, since when anybody but Bob wants to interview or record him, he refuses to talk to them, insisting that, in fact, the Wexler they're looking for is dead. But Bob speaks Yiddish, and tells him dirty jokes in Yiddish, and sings the old songs with him. He likes Bob. So after about half an hour of cajoling, we managed to get him to pick up

Diona's fiddle and play. It didn't take him long to warm up, and then he covered it all. Not just the traditional wedding repertoire, but tunes from the Jewish musical theatre of the 30s, and, inspiring, several new compositions of his own. Then the 88 year-old man told a dick joke in Yiddish.

After that, he said he was done playing, and asked us to play for him. We tried out one of my newer songs on him, and he said it was "very pretty". As a result, I was insufferably pleased with myself for several days, according to my travelling companions.

So the trip was a success, I'd say. Definitely worth the suffering in the Romanian hospital.

I guess the most important thing I took back from the trip was dirt. There's a lot of dirt in the music we found. These people are masterful players, but they always have that ability to bring dissonance, "wrong" notes, sawing "too" hard with the bow, singing so loud and passionately that pitch and meter are irrelevant issues. And the words in the songs are full of dirt, full of drinking, politics and lots of sex. I wonder if the Ramones' families emigrated from Maramures. It sometimes seems that in folk music, there's a tendency to wash the dirt out of a particular music, to make it respectable, or acceptable, or some bullshit. In my future recordings, I intend to cram as much of it back in as I can."

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PERSON
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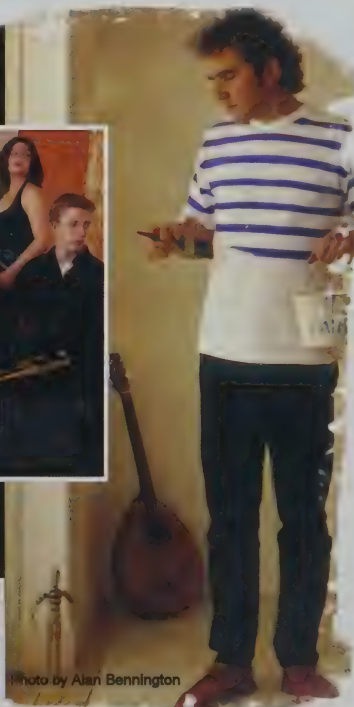


Photo by Alan Bennington

It's a blue blue autumn at NorthernBlues

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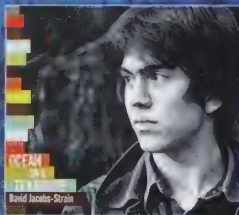
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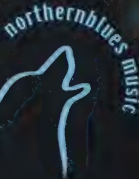
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Photo By : Frank Gasparik and The EFMT

Earl Scruggs on stage at Edmonton

An Englishman Abroad

As author of the hilarious and heartfelt In Search of the Craic: One Man's Pub Crawl Through Irish Traditional Music, and long-time contributor to the likes of Mojo and fRoots magazines, Colin Irwin is possibly the most insightful and entertaining journalist writing about folk music, period. This is the man who coined the term "rogue folk." And this summer he was coaxed away from soggy England to give an unbiased yet opinionated account of the Calgary, Canmore and Edmonton folk festivals. By Colin Irwin.

Parachuting into Calgary on a warm afternoon, we are swiftly brought up to speed with the local mood. "Actually," says the enthusiastic Calgary Folk Festival volunteer despatched to collect us, "Calgary is kinda high at the moment." Visions of a city on mind-expanding drugs swept before me. This was going to be a wilder trip than I'd imagined.

"Yeah," he beams. "We're still buzzing from the Stanley Cup..." "I'd never heard of Stanley or his cup but by the time we reached the Westin Hotel, I knew chapter and verse on the heroics of the Flames and the heartbreak of that last match against Tampa Bay. Not to mention all the gossip from the Calgary Stampede. "It's been an exciting few weeks for us," says my new best chum, "and now the folk festival is here it's about to get even more exciting..."

He's not wrong either. As an introduction to Canadian festivals, Calgary is pretty damn special. Wading through the joggers, cyclists and professional duck feeders who seem to form a protective ring around Prince's Island, the wondrous setting

is immediately striking. But once safely aboard the island, the mood is cheery and celebratory – this is, after all, Calgary's 25th anniversary – and as a veteran of the miserable weather, gloomy officialdom, bad behaviour and poor facilities that often seem a requisite of so many UK festivals, it feels an exceptional pleasure, nay a privilege, to be here.

Great weather, good food, helpful, unfussy organisation, big screens, pleasant beer garden and (mostly) fine music...I feel strangely euphoric.

I'm not sure I'll ever get the hang of the protocol surrounding Canadian tarp culture – in the UK we have a name for people who get up early to mark their territory – Germans!

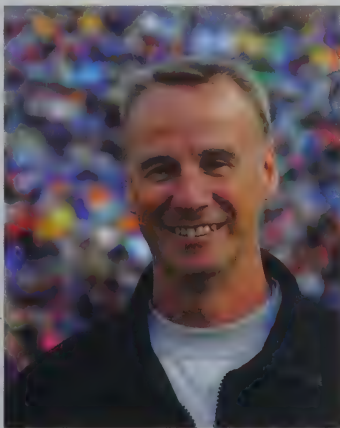


Photo By : Frank Gasparik and The EFMT

Colin Irwin

Not that tarp is the only cultural difference immediately apparent as I discover while pondering why the crowd is going bananas singing along with Stompin' Tom Connors much later that day. I feel like the bloke who's turned up at a party and discovers everyone is telling jokes in Swahili. "So what did you think of Stompin' Tom..."? people queue up to ask me. "Well, he's no Johnny Cash..." I say diplomatically.

I must admit to being seriously underwhelmed by another local hero, Corb Lund, but Taj Mahal seems in something like vintage gritty form, taking the blues on a varied, expansive journey. But it's the first glimpse of two previously unseen European bands, Italy's Fiamma Fumana and Poland's Warsaw Village Band, which really stays in the memory from that opening night. In fact, pursuit of the Italians' infectious cool beats, passionate songs and vibrant performances throughout the weekend verges on stalking; their Saturday morning workshop with the enigmatic Warsaw band provides an almost breathtaking fusion of Euro cultures.

Nothing too exceptional hovers from the Friday night concerts, apart from the splendidly eccentric beard, hat, trousers and dancing of Angus Grant of Shooglenifty, who's not a bad fiddle player either. And North Mississippi Allstars strutting their stuff in an unblemished if hardly original personification of southern rock and putting in a determined bid for the 'loudest band of the weekend' title.

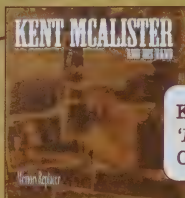
Come the weekend workshops and the fun really starts. Here's another big departure from UK festivals. We do have workshops, but they tend to have a more literal interpretation, essentially guiding you through the academic rudiments of banjo, fiddle, guitar, songwriting or whatever, with musical illustrations along the way. Here, though, disparate artists are plunged, seemingly almost at random, on a stage together in the expectation/hope fireworks will result. Or not, as the case may be.

It's a thrilling notion and one that has you defying Calgary's blistering sunshine to sprint between the conglomerate of six stages in search of the perfect mix 'n' match. Sometimes you think they picked the names out of a hat. And you can't help but wonder about the lottery of vague 'themes' invented to drive the sessions. There are some corkers at Calgary: "Steal This Workshop", "Your Folk Fetishist", and my favourite, "Odd Ball, Corner Pocket." You're not sure if you're at a folk festival or on a holiday camp with your shrink.

But these sessions provide some of the festival's most memorable moments. If nothing else, the Ship & Anchor stage offers welcome shade and allows a swift assessment of how the Brit contingent is do-

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ing. Not bad, as it happens. Dick Gaughan is in splendid form, Thea Gilmore overcomes a nightmare plane journey from Blighty to get quickly into the swing, Andy White graciously accedes to requests for his aged but still his greatest song, *Religious Persuasion* and Martyn Joseph...well, Martyn Joseph proves to be something of a revelation.

He's barely known on the UK folk scene (the perception of a failed pop star oddly clings to him) but appearing first thing Sunday morning with Linda Tillery and her gang on the gospel slot, he's a sensation. Scarcely visible at the back of a stage crowded with not only Linda Tillery's own Cultural Heritage Choir, but Ruthie Foster, Rhonda Vincent and supporting musicians, he creeps forward to deliver a song – *He Never Said* – of such passion, venom and political intent, it knocks us all backwards.

Elsewhere, there are mixed blessings. As a huge fan of Trish Klein's work with The Be Good Tanyas, I am left severely disappointed by Po' Girl's unfocused meandering; and, likably giggly as they are, the Rankin Sisters' mainstage concert badly fails to rouse itself out of the stupor of the Saturday lunchtime heat. But Ruthie Foster is here, there and everywhere, almost always impressing; and there are some telling cameos from two very different guitar virtuosos, Tony McManus and Juan Jose Carranza. Sound bleeds between the different stages are also deeply frustrating, though I later discover it's not a problem confined to Calgary.

There's also a moment of high emotion during Spirit Of The West's triumphant returning heroes concert on Saturday, when they climax their set with *Come Back Oscar*, their clarion call to Calgary guitar icon Oscar Lopez, apparently lost to music after a series of personal woes. There's a roar from the crowd and plenty of tears backstage as Oscar himself, eyes screwed shut, is wooed back on stage for the first time in ages to play the song's closing guitar run.

One of the pleasures of crossing the Atlantic in search of music is the opportunity to discover pre-

viously unseen artists and there are plenty to be found this weekend. Martyn Joseph notwithstanding, singer songwriters are all but extinct in the UK so Chuck Brodsky comes as a rare joy. Wry little story songs, a voice like a young Dylan and an obsession with baseball...his *Ballad Of Eddie Klepp* becomes the unchallenged No 1 in my hire car jukebox over the next two weeks.

In the same category comes Arlene Bishop with her brave build-ups and killer punchlines; the hugely likable Nathan, cowboy hats and all; irresistible Mexicans Los De Abajo; the profound and profoundly fascinating Rae Spoon; and that man Michael Franti, blending so many styles from hip hop to reggae to jazz to folk that it makes all these silly categorisations and 'file under' definitions wholly redundant.

Calgary's silver jubilee party grooves away in a classy melange of cultures and styles. Corey Harris smoothly gliding through his highly individual variations on the blues...Yousou N'Dour persuasively coaxing the audience to their feet with seductive rhythms and that voice...Lucinda Williams sitting them all down again with an inconsistent, ragged set, though a guest appearance by Steve Earle goes down well...and an agreeable if laid-back finale from James Keelaghan.

As we leave the island, a grinning volunteer yells 'thank you'. 'No,' I say, 'thank YOU'.

"See you next year then?"

"I'm booking the flight right now."

And then we head for the hills...

Canmore is, well, intimate...and the Stan Rogers stage glowing under the spectacular backdrop of the Rockies creates a unique atmosphere. It gets off to a memorable start, too, as three fine artists not on the official bill – Dick Gaughan, Martyn Joseph and Nathan Rogers – join forces to pay a musical tradition to Canmore's mining tradition.

By the end of that opening night I seem to be having an out of body experience, dancing (in an embarrassing dad-dancing sort of way, obviously) to Hans Theesink who, in an infectious spirit of Euro-Afro unity, is blending his subtle blues



Keri McTighe of Nathan

Photo By: Camilo Gomez

rhythms with the vocal gymnastics of Zimbabweans Insingizi.

The weather isn't so kind to Canmore - and the blankets are out in force for most of Sunday's events, which inevitably include the ritual rota of interesting workshops. A songwriters collective involving Martin Simpson, Chip Taylor and Garnet Rogers is particularly engaging. Which is more than can be said for the tediously indulgent muso doodling of Brave Combo's amalgamation with The Waybacks. As a bitterly cold, damp night ensnares the festival, I sneak away.

Yet Holiday Monday dawns as bright as a button and we're away again into all these wonderfully mad workshop things before winding up into what turns out to be a superb final night. The alt.country of Nathan seems even more likeable here and if Keri McTighe can just come up with a couple of showstopping songs, there'll be no holding them. There's also a heartwarmingly relaxed set of old time country and bluegrass from John Reischman & The Jaybirds; and you can't argue with the energy and virtuosity of The McDades, though I do lose the will to live when they abandon their Irish roots for endless jazz noodling.

Enter Martin Simpson. I've been watching this guy open-mouthed for several centuries and never thought I'd see a finer performance from him than the one that held Cambridge Festival in England spellbound last summer. But this warm night in Canmore, he tops even that. Tension, innovation, technique, power, tenderness, humour, politics, drama, tradition...tonight has it all and as both singer and guitarist, Simpson surpasses himself.

After that I want to go home, imagining nothing can top it, but hang around out of curiosity and The Paperboys deliver an upbeat, celebratory finale.

Then there's a short speech from organiser Ken Rooks, a gathering of the clans on stage and we're into the final countdown, led by Nathan Rogers and Cindy Church taking us into *Four Strong Winds*. Looking up at Nathan singing his heart out on the stage named after his father under a glowing moon shining through the mountains is, even, I'll admit it, a deeply emotional moment. It even knocks Calgary's swaying James Keelaghan finale into a cocked hat. [Continued on page 63]

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PENGUIN
EGGS
Autumn
2004

Feature



Tarp culture in Calgary

Photo By: Frank Gaspard



Photo: Bill Hildrich/Stratford

The Bills: left to right – Marc Atkinson, Adrian Dolan, Glen Manders, Chris Frye and Jeremy Penner

Running on Plenty

The Bill Hilly Band are now officially The Bills. They have also made a new record. These facts are not mutually exclusive, as it turns out. For several reasons, the rather exquisite Let 'Em Run is a watershed recording for the Victoria-based band. And when the winds blow cold across the Tundra come Juno time next March, it may just emerge as the bookies' favourite. Roddy Campbell has the inside track.

A shoeless young crusty shuffles towards our tent. He points along a dusty track. A worried look fills eyes as big as hubcaps.

"Hey man, is that a cemetery in that field?"

"No, that's seagulls."

"Holy crow!"

"No, seagulls."

It's the morning after the night before at the North Country Fair – the annual celebration of the summer solstice on the shore of Lesser Slave Lake. The Bills, once collectively known as The Bill Hilly Band, are here. The Swiftys, John Millard & Happy Day, Rae Spoon, Amos Garrett, Bill Bourne and Genticorum too – a stellar lineup all round, really.

I mentioned those Bills didn't I. But I didn't tell you about their partiality to a Glenmorangie or

two at three o'clock in the morning... so there we were, Chris Frye, Marc Atkinson and the entire staff of Penguin Eggs – well, both of us – setting the world to rights on a park bench in the pitch dark. Only The Bills had just reduced the entire population of the village of Jossard to bedlam an hour or so ago and every nocturnal wayfarin' stranger that staggers our way declares their undying devotion to the band.

"We love you!"

"You guys are awesome!"

Awsome, The Bills most certainly are. Over the past five years, they've worked their socks off to mature into one of the most exhilarating live acoustic folk-roots bands in North America. And they've done it with exquisite flair, good humour, a great deal of dogged determination... and the odd peck on appropriate posteriors. All their hard work and unconventional creativity appears to have finally paid dividends with numerous prestigious engagements this year ranging from the Tønder Folk Festival, Denmark, to the Strawberry Music Festival in Yosemite, California.

As their confidence on stage has grown, so too has their writing and recording. Any folk group bold enough to admit to *My Fair Lady* or

Dark Side of The Moon as inspirations is either barking mad or cradles unflappable convictions. Well, in the clear light of day, or for that matter, on a moonlit Alberta night, they will tell you straight-faced their recording strategy came from The Beatles.

"You know the story of The Beatles?" asks an earnest Marc Atkinson.

"Erm, yes, I've heard of them."

"They never composed at first. They just learned songs. Chris and I talked about this. We are huge Beatles fans. We created the band as a vehicle to study folk music; because, it's a wonderful thing to learn. That's why we did one original on the first album and five originals on the second – we were just working our way into it."

Well, it appears they finally mastered this folk song malarky. This summer the Victoria-based quintet released *Let 'Em Run*, a recording composed entirely by Messrs Atkinson, Frye and 21-year-old multi-instrumentalist Adrian Dolan. Okay, they also recorded Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust*. But they always cover one jazz standard: Cole Porter's *Begin The Beguine* last time out and Lerner and Loewe's *I Could Have Danced All Night* prior to that. Just consider it a tradition of sorts.

Whatever. *Let 'Em Run* retains all the wonderful hallmarks of the Bills liberating string-band eclecticism. Yet it also takes them into unimaginable territory: a French Frye original, a West Coast sea shanty and an orchestral maneuver, just for starters. It's all seamlessly stitched together with ubiquitous threads of bluegrass and old-time mountain music, along with a Celtic caper or two and the usual tasteful smattering of acoustic jazz.

"Eclecticism keeps everything fresh," says that giant of a man, Chris Frye. "And the cool thing is, everybody in the band has eclectic tastes. You should hear the mixed tapes we play in the van. But we were really in a mode to work together on this album. We had sessions which were like, bury your soul – throw your ego out the door and be ready for criticism from your friend, musically. And that's hard.

"What do you think?"

"No. No. Yes. We'll keep that."

"In the end we feel really proud of this record because we had to put aside a lot or change things in a certain way."

Marc: "You know, Chris wrote ten songs and we chose five. I'm very proud working with a person who can do that. There's not a lot of people that can say, 'Okay, we're not going to use those five songs that I wrote'."

Right then, we've put it off for long enough: time to deal with their name change. Well as it turns out, the move towards an abbreviated version of The Bill Hilly Band coincided with the dumping of the more stock elements of their humour. They finally stopped addressing each other as Bill Guitar, Bill Mandolin, Bill Fiddle... etcetera. The off-the-wall choreography and physical humour also went by the wayside. And no tunes with wacky time signatures and quirky titles made it on to the new recording. These steps they took to curb any no-

tions of them becoming a novelty act.

Chris: "Too many people were thinking, 'This is a schtick band,' because of the name. We've always just called ourselves The Bills. If you are just called The Bills nobody is going to pigeonhole you as a novelty act.

Marc: "We are not a novelty act. We didn't start out as a novelty at all. We were never a novelty act."

Chris: "But sometimes people saw too much novelty. I think in writing our own songs and shortening the name to The Bills, we're trying to establish our intentions... We are hard on ourselves. We are hard on everything we hear. We are holding up songs that we are writing to the best folk songs that we've heard. When we learn a folk song, I'll listen to three or four albums in a certain genre and I'll pick one song that I really think is fantastic – great melodies and stuff – and then we'll arrange it our way.

"That's the way we learn traditional songs – the greatest hit out of four albums worth. Then we try and write a song and compare it to that – the best of the best, in our opinion. It's challenging. It's great, though. I'm glad we hold ourselves up to that standard because a lot of albums can have filler – down time, Marc calls it. We are trying to make albums with enough going on that when you get to the end you feel like 'Wow, I was with it all the way'."

Glad we got that all straightened out.

Now, without a doubt, one of the most satisfying aspects of *Let 'Em Run* is Chris Frye's development as a lyricist. How utterly splendid to see him write about characters and landmarks in and around Victoria. Let's face it, sea shanties written on the West Coast are as rare these days as receipts for Andre Ouellet's expenses. Yet, Frye, inspired by his 89-year-old uncle, wrote the glorious a cappella *Banfield's John Vanden*. It truly is a worthy addition to the great cannon of maritime folk songs.

Then there's *The Blue Bridge* with its brilliant bluegrass backdrop. In reality, the bridge – built by the engineer who designed San Francisco's Golden Gate – separates Victoria from the suburb of Esquimalt and, apparently, the wrong side of the tracks from the right. Frye poignantly sets his protagonist amidst the poverty and chronic unemployment that followed World War I as he wanders back and forth across the bridge looking for work to feed his family. Sterling stuff, indeed.

More surprisingly, Frye wrote the jaunty *Oil Au Beurre Noir (Black Egg)* entirely in French. True, he had a little help from his bilingual wife. Marc provided the raucous melody.

The joker in the pack, though, is *Lay Down*. It's inspired by the writing of Tom Waits, Bob Dylan and David Francey. For the first time, Frye resorted not to a narrative but rather a series of sexual images placed in the back streets of Victoria. It also plays on the wonderful seasonal light which surrounds the city at various times of the year. And it all comes together as a colorful collage set way over yonder in a minor key.

Chris: "It was great; it was a big release. When it came together, I was really excited. It is so exciting to sing songs about where you are from. We have sang bluegrass songs that we have learned over the years, and they are about Kentucky and Tennessee. People all over Canada are singing about the Mississippi River and *Banks of the Bann*. Now I'm singing more about Victoria, and I'll tell you, it's a lot easier to get my heart behind it. That feels good."

An acoustic instrumental adaptation of Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust* is the only cover then. Directly and indirectly jazz has always played a key role in the development of The Bills. Indeed, Marc Atkinson initially played jazz guitar in the fusion combo, Loose. Chris Frye was his student. Both, however, also nurtured a love for folk music. And so to pursue this passion Marc took up the mandolin and accordion, and with musical collaborators Frye (guitar), Scott White (fiddle), Paul Dowd (banjo) and Ollie Swain (bass), set about learning the A.B.C.s of folk music. Encouraged by their progress, talk soon turned to busking on the streets of Europe in the summer of 1997. It proved a pivotal point for them all.

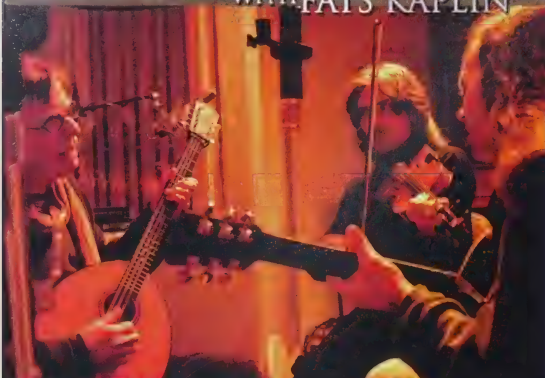
Marc: "The very first time we whipped out our instruments we drew a huge crowd and they gave us a lot of money, Strasbourg France, is responsible for The Bills because that was where it happened. We played in the cafes and we played in the square and the response was insane."

Chris: "We busked on the streets of Copenhagen, Strasbourg, Berlin, Milan Amsterdam – we played everywhere. And what happens on the streets is you learn how to entertain and project and to rock. If you wanted to have a beer that night you had to succeed. People have to put money in your case. What more inspiration do you need? So basically that trip to Europe in June and July 1997, we



Photos By: Dorenda Smita

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played our hearts out and we learned a lot of music together. We formed the spirit of what The Bills are still today – a band that entertains and has a focus of good musicianship. This combination, you don't always see. It became our mantra. That trip to Europe, we came home feeling like a band. 'It's official. We have a band.'"

Yeah Chris, and a million road stories, huh!

Chuckles. Chuckles. And more chuckles.

"Our bass player [Ollie Swain] had a lot of sex. He put us all to shame. There was some communicable diseases, run-ins with the police fairly regularly, a massage therapist in Berlin who got to know the band intimately piece by piece – there was a lot of love."

In Hamburg, Germany, they bumped into former Stringband and Romaniacs fiddler Calvin Cairns, who was working with Circus Soleil at the time. Back in BC, he replaced Scott White who moved to Europe. And Glen Manders took over from Swain, who joined Scrj MacDuhk.

Still it took until 2000 before they released their debut, the imaginatively-titled, *The Bill Hilly Band*. Released independently and Impressively international in scope, it proved a solid calling card. And it stood them in good standing when the annual North American Folk Alliance conference landed in Vancouver in February, 2001. That event proved a launching pad for The Be Good Tanyas, The Waifs and The Bill Hilly Band.

Chris: "I have a degree in marketing from the University of British Columbia – a Bachelor of Commerce honours degree. You can't tell anyone.

I wanted to market this act. I wanted to get excited. I'm shameless about it.

"I couldn't believe it when I found out about the folk alliance conference being held in Vancouver. Everybody that was important in the world of folk music in North America was going to be in a hotel for three days. So I told the band, 'We are going.' We paraded through the lobby and up and down the escalator and we showboated. 'None of you know that we have staying power but by the end of the weekend you are going to know that we can entertain.' I went in there and I shook hands. I kissed everyone's ass and did it all. So the conference in Vancouver really was the band coming out of the closet."

Marc: "A little bit of momentum started there. We're not a Coldplay. We haven't had a huge hit and are all of a sudden catapulted into the spotlight. You work. You tour. But that was the moment. A few people said, 'Okay, let's give this band a chance. Folk music is nice that way. People talk and stuff.'"

More personnel changes accompanied the release of *All Day Every Day* in 2002. Calvin Cairns left to become a music teacher. Nineteen-year-old whizz kid, multi-instrumentalist, Adrian Dolan took his place. Paul Dowd also dropped out but the band remained a quartet until April, 2003, when they added Jeremy Penner on second fiddle.

Marc: "Jeremy was in the Duhks. They had a very tumultuous breakup and we caught him while he was still in therapy and brought him back from the brink. He fits right in. He's a Bill. We just think

we are the luckiest guys in the world with two great fiddlers in the same band.

Adrian, as you know, is a multi-instrumentalist. He's a virtuoso on piano, accordion and violin, and when you have that you can really get into orchestral arrangements."

Released by Borealis Records, *All Day Every Day* deservedly earned a Juno nomination and won a Western Canada Music Award as roots album of the year. And when the winds blow cold across the Tundra next March, *Let 'Em Run* may just emerge as the bookies' favourite for that elusive Juno. Meanwhile, The Bills remain thoroughly content with their lot.

Chris: "We feel like we are part of an amazing thing that is happening in Canada. There is a great folk music scene in this country. Really strong. For me, the most satisfying thing in the last three years, since we've been touring. I think we've gained a place in this wonderful scene. And Le Vent du Nord, James Keelaghan, David Francey and all these people have all become genuine friends that we look forward to seeing and hearing. That's a very special feeling. This huge vast country has this very tight group of people who are performing folk music and writing about this country. It's very exciting. I feel blessed to be a part of it.

"Damn, that's good Scotch!"

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PENGUIN
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The Bills



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Natalie Merchant

The Penguin Eggs Interview



Natalie Merchant

Natalie Merchant's lifelong love of folk music finally emerged in all its splendid glory on *The House Carpenter's Daughter*. Released in late 2003, the details are in the subtitle: 'A collection of traditional and contemporary folk music,' it reads. Merchant, of course, has always retained elements of folk—both with *10000 Maniacs* and on her solo recordings—but nothing quite as Spartan or as divinely close to the source as this. *The Weeping Pilgrim* and *The Poor Wayfaring Stranger* she found in old hymn books borrowed from the Lincoln Center Public Library in New York. Yet, *Crazy Man Michael* harkens back to her initial teenage infatuation with Sandy Denny and Fairport Convention. And *The Horseflies'* gorgeously mournful Sally Ann also comes from the same period. Indeed, Merchant recruited former *Horseflies* Judy Hyman and Richie Stearns for their traditional qualities. Roddy Campbell spoke to Merchant prior to her triumphant set at the Edmontown Folk Music Festival this past summer.

What inspired you to make *The House Carpenter's Daughter* at this point in time?

Well, I was listening to folk music on and off since I was about sixteen. The reason the whole project started was my guitar player Erik [Della Penna] and I would always be back stage and have an acoustic guitar—or maybe we would be on the bus, or in the hotel. When we tried to play acoustic music together, other than Dylan songs and Beatle songs, our knowledge of traditional music didn't overlap at all. So I wanted to come up with a repertoire that we could play just for fun. And once we started playing it, we worked together more and found songs. We were getting more and more excited about the stuff we were discovering and decided to go on tour and teach it to the rest of the band. That's when I asked Judy and Richie—they were the sort of missing piece for the band because the rest of us had never played much traditional music. I had known the *Horseflies* for years and played with them

when the *Maniacs* were together. They lived in Ithaca not far from where we grew up in Trenton.

And of course, you covered the *Horseflies* Sally Ann.

Actually, the *Maniacs* used to play it. I've always loved it. And I thought it deserved the exposure too. We did it on *Letterman* a couple of nights ago. And Jeff [Claus], Judy's husband, who wrote the lyrics was in the audience. He was really touched. They were a pretty obscure band in the States, probably anywhere in the world. The other guest on the show was Bill Clinton so I think the amount of people watching was pretty high. It was pretty thrilling for Jeff, for any folk musician, to have a piece on national television.

Where did *Owensboro* come from?

That was a book that I had for years—just a sampler of American folk music—it's anonymous. I don't know where it comes from. I don't know when it was written. I changed the title it was called *I Lived In A Town*. I just called it *Owensboro* but I didn't change any of the words. I think it was written by a woman. Because she talks about her children and she talks about: 'People in town they dress fine they wouldn't pay attention to people who dress like us.' And she talks about the pearly strings—that is such a great line: 'Let them wear their watches fine/let them wear their gems and pearly stings/but when the day of judgment comes/they'll have to share them pretty things.'

***Diver Boy* and *The House Carpenter*, I understand you got from a recording of Doc Watson's mother?**

It was rereleased by Rounder or Smithsonian, one of those two. It looks by the cover it was made in the '70s. She sounds pretty ancient (she starts to sing in an authentic, nasal, Appalachian voice). To take her recording, or any of the field recordings I listen to sometimes, it's a stretch of the imagination to really hear the songs. I can't remember where I heard it, but on *Ophelia* I recorded *When They Ring Them Golden Bells*, the version I learned from was one of those scratchy 78s from the 1930s and it sounded like a backwoods preacher (now she sings in a gruff backwoods voice). But I could hear there was a beautiful song in there.

And Crazy Man Michael – obviously you were a Sandy Denny fan

Yes, ever since I was about seventeen. The guitar player with 10,000 Maniacs, John Lombardo, he loved Fairport Convention. He gave me all his Fairport records to tape back when we used to tape albums, when I first joined 10,000 Maniacs.

You were also into June Tabor, Dolores Keane and Anne Briggs.

I used to listen to them a lot more. To be honest, I don't listen to much English-speaking music these days. I listen to world music. I guess I tend to listen to Black American singers. If I had to list my favourite ones, they would be Nina Simone, Etta James, Billie Holiday, Mahalia Jackson. Mavis Staples is one of my favourite singers. At the same time, I love someone like Sister Rosetta Tharpe. She's overly soothing. So I love a lot of American singers but I guess I tend more towards the blues and gospel tunes. I have a lot of respect for people like Joan Baez and Judy Collins. But I think I was more drawn to the British singers. It just appeals to me. It satisfies me when I'm listening to folk music. It's not like I like a silken vocal. I think I was drawn to the material they were doing. It was just an older deeper tradition, the storytelling. They are effortlessly poetic. Really unassuming.

Did the songs that went on The House Carpenter's Daughter have to meet a certain criteria?

Just songs I liked. I certainly don't want to come off as being some kind of musicologist with a focus on American or British folk music. I'm not. I'm dabbling in it. I found it really liberating to record music that I didn't have the burden of my own associations – writing the lyrics, or labouring over the arrangements, or whatever.

Was it harder arranging traditional music rather writing your own songs?

No. That was really easy. I find it much more difficult creating something out of nothing. I'm a much better editor, rearranging elements, than I am creating elements.

It such a spartan recording

People always said they loved the performance when I played the piano and sing, or had an acoustic guitar and sing. I haven't done very much of that until now. I just think there's a lot of music that I've recorded that was lacking space. I'm more interested in music with these pockets of silence. God I haven't done an interview in so long. And once you've had a kid I feel I traded my brain for a baby. I'm really struggling here. I'm sure there's a lot more people at this folk festival who are a lot more qualified to have this discussion with you about the way they arrive at their songs because they learned them from their grandparents. 'Here's a song I learned from

my grandpappy.' My grandfather was from Sicily. He knew nothing about American folk music he would watch Hee Haw on television and he would say, 'I love a da hillbilly music.' He played the mandolin, fiddle and accordion. My other grandfather was in a barber shop quartette and a piano tuner. We didn't have a lot of my grandpappy on the back porch with a banjo. I learned about folk music from records.

Why do you think such a traditional recording as The House Carpenter's Daughter has struck such a chord with people?

I think a lot of people are just yearning for something more human, more authentic, an experience with music that is more human. That's probably why the audience are here. That's probably why they read your publication and buy the records you discuss. I'm personally getting worn out by the fact there has to be recorded music everywhere I go – in the elevator, in the taxi cab, in the supermarket, in the clothing store, in the cafe. A lot of people come to visit me and they realize after several days that I haven't played any music at all. And I tell them silence is such a rare commodity in my life these days. I really guard silence. And when I decide to listen to music I'm very specific about what I'm listening too. I go to music for a specific purpose. I just feel bombarded. My senses are totally overloaded all the time. I think a lot of people are like that. And there's something really soothing just to hear a banjo and a voice – less to focus on. I remember going to the Zooroppa Tour, I have a lot of admiration for U2, and I think they've explored a lot of unique territory. Anyway, I came away from the Zooroppa Tour wishing I could just see someone like Nina Simone at a pi-

ano. I didn't need a belly dancer and a mirrored car spinning around. I just wanted to hear somebody sing a song and mean it and. That's it. And I sort of have that experience when I hear music. There's too many machines involved.

What is it about folk music that you find so appealing?

I think it's the historical aspect of it that I really appreciate. If it's a traditional song, the lyrics could have been sung for three or four hundred years. It gives me a first person narrative written by someone who lived in a time that, in some ways, is so remote that it is unrecognizable to me. And then there's some universal experience, some eternal experience – whether it's love, loss, especially now that I have a child – that resonates in me and I can understand because of the women who have written lullabies, or songs of despair and loss for other women who have passed on. Before, so many songs that I knew were about romantic love. I certainly could have identified with that then but now I have discovered maternal love. It is a totally different experience. It is so much deeper and it is so much more dimensional. I find there's not so much music written about that. Not in contemporary music. But anyway, folk music satisfies my mind. I hear phrases that are simple and unassumingly poetic and at the same time it is written in a language that is very illuminating. We would never hear it in our everyday conversations. I think that is something that appeals to me.



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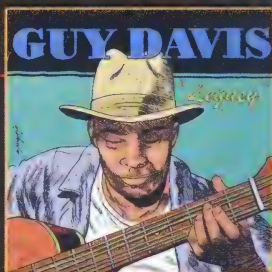
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Mory Kanté

Sabou
Riverboat – TUGCD 1034

The most flamboyant kora player in all of Africa, that Mory Kanté. And a handy lad with a balafon too. Who can forget his trailblazing cover of *Yéyé Yéyé* that became an acid house club hit in Europe. It sold over a million singles – the first African recording to do so. All that commercial success in 1988, however, made his head spin and he lost the plot for a period dabbling heavily with synthesizers and whatnot. Now, with the release of *Sabou*, the Guinean groit has clearly returned to his roots in spectacular fashion.

Traditionally-based and largely all-acoustic, it is both impressively tender and fabulously upbeat. Continuously refreshing too with its subtle twists and turns – a driving Arabic percussion here, a jazz riff there – nothing pervasive. While Kanté's kora and balafon playing remain as uplifting and riveting as ever, it's the gorgeous, soaring, female vocal harmonies throughout that provide this disc with much of its relentlessly charming. Combined with Kanté's powerfully intense vocal presence, it turns *Sabou* into one of the most emotionally heartening and consistently thrilling discs of an already colourful career.

– By Roddy Campbell

Michael Jerome Browne & the Twin Rivers String Band

Michael Jerome Browne
& the Twin Rivers String Band
Borealis – CD BCD163

Let's get effusive right up top: this is as good as a contemporary country blues album gets, a tradition-infused acoustic wonder that's riveting, relaxing, and knee-slapping through the course, full of the long-forgotten creativity of

Son House's secret catalogue, with the sensuous soul of Patsy Cline. Amid the string-wood-encyclopedia variety pack nestle several pretty country numbers, like the duets **Just Look Up** and **You Done Me Wrong**, the latter hinting at the fierce Cajun fiddling heard later on **Two Step de la Vile Platte**. Twirling and spinning around Browne's laid-back, bilingual blue-grassy singing – which actually brings Honeyboy Edwards to mind – are plenty of nice mandolin and lap-steel, too. The ever-advancing work of one fine Montrealese from Indiana, this is the total opposite of all that Chicago, Blueshammer, Sammy Hagar crap that we mistakenly call the blues.

– By Fish Griwkowsky

The Bills

Let Em Run
Borealis – BCD164

Here come The Bills with the follow up to 2002's award-winning *All Day Every Day*, with a shortened name and a new fiddler – former Sertij MacDuhk, Jeremy Penner.

And all we can do is stare in amazement as they stride like a colossus across the acoustic music scene. These guys can play just about any North American traditional musical style. Or, come to think of it, these guys can play anything. They are inspired and versatile, engaging and funny, sincere and warm, spectacularly good live and more than a bit nuts. They surely practiced loads to get this good.

If you want variety it is here. There's bluegrass, classical, jazz, acapella folk singing and lots more to savour. More than that, they wrote the whole thing themselves. Fiddle, accordion, bass, guitar, piano and mandolin are all woven seamlessly together to produce the distinctive and unmistakable sound of great musicians enjoying the hell out of playing.

Favourites of mine include the acappella

Bamfield's John Vanden, the fiddle and flat-pick driven instrumental, *The Gallinburg*, and fiddler-keyboardist-acordionist Adrian Dolan's *Cambridge Set*. Chris Frye's voice has grown stronger and more commanding since the last CD and mandolinist Marc Atkinson continues to lead from the front with cavalier soloing and musical derring-do. An absolute corker of a recording, this.

– By Tim Readman

Nathan Rogers

Tue Stories
Halfway Cove Music – Halfway001

I was scared to play this debut album, nowing the genealogy of young Mr. Rogers – son of the Canadian folk icon Stan and nephew to Garnet. There are enough pitfalls that loom for a young musician. No one needs those huge shadows in addition. Fear not, Nathan has all the tools to make his own way proudly. While not perfect, but for a 24-year-old, it's a surprisingly mature and terrific debut.

There are a couple of gems on this collection. *Mary's Child*, about the Jesuits in French Canada and the impact of white diseases on the native population, is a stunning song both musically and lyrically. Equally wonderful is *Hibbing*, an evocative portrait in song about the town in Minnesota whose sole reason for existence was once a giant strip mine and being the birthplace of Greyhound Bus Lines (and not one mention of that other famous Hibbing son – Mr. Zimmerman).

The highlight of the album is Nathan's version of *Three Fishers*. Words of Charles Kingsley set to a tune by his Garnet and previously recorded by Stan. Backed by Nicky Metha from the Wailin' Jennys, Nathan's performance is beautifully understated which just adds to the poignancy of this tale of maritime tragedy.

True Stories is a terrific first step and makes me want to fast forward to hear what he'll be writing when he's 34.

– By Les siemienuk

Yousou N'Dour

Egypt
Nonesuch – PRCD 301425

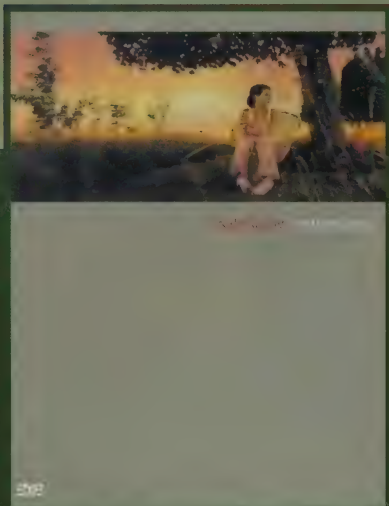
Senegal's Yousou N'Dour has long been regarded as a musical superstar throughout Africa. In a long and prolific recording career, N'Dour has successfully balanced pop with the traditions of his homeland. Alternating between lush and sparse arrangements, *Egypt* is firmly rooted in the traditional vein. Deeply reflective, the album is a meditation on his Muslim faith, using the rhythms and melodies of Senegal, while featuring Egyptian and Arabian orchestral sounds.

As much a scholarly work as it is a musical recording, *Egypt's* lyrics celebrate a distinctly Senegalese way of Islam, and of Sufi thought and practice. While the music opens the ears to passionate rhythms and melodies, the album's

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translated lyrics open the mind to N'Dour's deeply respected faith. This is a departure from much of his past work, but shows a side of this celebrated musician that the world needs to see, particularly at this point in history.

- By Martin Kemp

Spirit of the West

Star Trails

MapleMusic - MNCD4402

Hard to believe it's been twenty years since SOTW's inception. To celebrate this anniversary, John Mann and the boys got back in the studio to record their first album since *Weights And Measures* in 1997. Even after all these years, the sound is vintage Celtic pop and Canadiana rock that paved the way for bands like Great Big Sea. While *Waiting For Martin* opens with a lovely flute air, *Come Back Oscar*, written for guitarist Oscar Lopez, kicks off with a melody reminiscent of *Strawberry Fields*.

New and interesting is the catchy *Enough Already Alright (Hello Cleveland)*, a song about a disappearing trip to the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame that features a soca rhythm and an Oi chorus. *Morning In The Bath Abbey* will please all who enjoy SOTW anthems such as *Home For A Rest*; it's a rollicking tune with a gospel style chorus and a ceilidh style bridge. Other than that, it's pretty much what you'd expect from them. If you're a fan of the band, you'll love this. If not, it's not going to change your mind.

- By Shawna Biamonte

Fiamma Fumana

Home

Omnium Recordings

OMM2034

Fiamma Orlandi has taken older popular songs from Emilia-Romagna in north western Italy, and reframed them in a techno-dance mode. She has struck gold. This latest release, full of tight, melodic, accompaniment from Alberto Cottica on accordion and guitar, Mehdi Paolos on various programming, and Jessica Lombardi on flute, Emilian pipes, and electric bass, provides a rich and rewarding backdrop for strong themes that deal with the hard lot of workers, a wartime rallying cry to kick out the Nazis, an appeal for the acceptance of immigrants in a

nation that was always culturally diverse, the desperation of a young woman to get married, a few touching love songs, and a call to get up and dance. With the electronica settings, most pieces are foot-tappers, although the more traditional instruments are given plenty of space, and the wonderful melodies shine through in stirring fashion. This is a very enjoyable release from a super talented band. Fiamma Fumana delighted audiences on their brief tour here this past summer; hopefully, we'll see them again next. In the meantime, this disc is out there, and it's a sparkler.

- By David Ingram

Leroy Carr

The Best of: Whiskey is my Habit.

Good Women is all I Crave
Columbia/Legacy - C2K 86989)

Pianist Leroy Carr Carr's hauntingly sweet voice, his simple tunes and piano work coupled with superb guitarist Francis "Scrapper" Blackwell's delightfully elaborate single-note guitar work made for an historic body of work - some 200 tunes between 1928-1935 - that deserves to be heard all over again. Had Carr not died of alcoholism at the age of 30, who knows what they might have accomplished. Yet *How Long - How Long Blues, Sloppy Drunk Blues, Blues Before Sunrise* and *Prison Bound Blues* have become standards. The comparatively crude recording techniques - thoughtfully remastered - only add to the mystique of the performance across this double-disc set. It certainly blows the back-end off Bing Crosby's efforts in these pre-electric days.

- By Eric Thom

Andy White

boy 40

True North - TND 325

This former child of Northern Ireland blends intellectually sharp lyrics with folk-pop musical sensibilities, creating a much-needed brand of folk music for the 21st Century.

The self-described "poet and powerbook-toting troubadour" writes smart songs, period. From love songs that pierce straight to the heart with their candid observations, to vividly perceptive tunes about the

state of the world, White doesn't seem to write a word that isn't chock full of meaning.

boy 40 is the work of an older, wiser Andy White, struggling to deal with "middle youth", in a world where it is hard to feel fully-grown. Topics range from Italian girls on mopeds, to terrorism, to growing up in Belfast. With the latter topics, White avoids talking about politics for politics sake. He instead humanizes all the issues he writes about, providing a compassionate view of the world as he sees it. This album is Andy White's birthday present to himself, and a wonderfully brilliant gift for all of us.

— By Martin Kemp

Ruthie Foster

Stages: Live Performances
Blue Corn Music — BCM 0403

This is Ruthie Foster's fourth release but the first to celebrate the energy of her live shows with partner, Cyd Cassone. Recorded in a church, a restaurant and a music club, the duo flit across a library of songs by the likes of Stephen Foster, Billie Holiday, John D. Loudermilk and Brownie McGee — as if born to it. In their care, these songs are lifted to a higher, more soulful plane as Ruthie seemingly channels Ella to Etta, Sam Cooke to Mahalia, yet sounds distinctively herself, with Cyd's harmonies adding an unforgettable edge to whatever the moment calls for. From the reggae heart of *Real Love* to achingly beautiful *Get Out of the Way*; from the brilliant reinvention of *Oh Susannah* to the spiritually uplifting *Full Circle*, Ruthie Foster is clearly at home on any stage. The trick is to be fortunate enough to be in the audience.

— By Eric Thom

Oliver Schroer

A Million Stars
Big Dog Music — BD0401

Oliver Schroer 2001 project *Restless Urban Primitive*, featured music made from everyday sounds, including doors shutting and footsteps echoing down a hall. While perhaps more accessible, *A Million Stars* is just as musically innovative.

Ranging from solo to orchestral work, the common theme here is, well, no real theme at all. A



Oliver Schroer

Million Stars gives him the opportunity to go in a million directions, while maintaining a cohesive album. The listener almost expects the next song to be exponentially different from the last. And it is. And it works. The album's finely crafted liner notes serve as a roadmap for this musical journey, setting the context for many of the works, while allowing Schroer to wax philosophical about his music. He often combines his varied instrumentation with voice, including those of Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir. However it doesn't rely on lyrics, nor does he need them to tell stories. On this album, it's all about the sounds.

— By Martin Kemp

Kieran Kane, Kevin Welch and Fats Kaplin

You Can't Save Everybody
Compass Records — 4385

A fine recording from three veteran Nashville musicians and songwriters who are currently working with David Francey. *You Can't Save Everybody* was recorded live over two nights in the studio with only a few over dubs. The result is an understated recording of well crafted and wonderfully played material. There's a confidence and a swagger to this set that is truly engaging. They are all good friends, very relaxed with one another and it shows. It is almost as if you had been invited into her living room to listen to a home-roots session. Well I for one don't want to go home. I'm going to stay right here and listen to the music.

— By Tim Readman

Wendy McNeill

Such A Common Bird
Independent

Rock and roll meets folk in the new age, boys...like the lovechild of Syd Barrett and Cyndi Lauper, but the kid might be Alistair MacGillveray's the way she can write an intricate piece of narrative poetry and set it in a post-rock soundscape of trumpets, upright pianos, sampled somethings and the ever-beloved accordion. This is a pretty nifty record. First, there's the accordion, the instrument of paradise, featured not only on the cover but as the opening statement. Second, McNeill's tunes fall somewhere between the raw urban poetics of the Ani DiFranco generation and the old-time love-politics of Seeger et al. Third, she's made a record that's a work unto itself: this baby's way more than a demo slapped together with a fancy cover. McNeill soars through the recording technology like a painter with a palette, occasionally moving more into the soundscape realm than the folk music one. But she'll bring it right back again with an a capella dedication to Edith Piaf, or an acoustic guitar love-endowing number. The first three songs are the killers: *Such a Common Bird* is a grand tune, and its close follow, *Julien*, is another — blending politics and poetry, music and madness. This is a pretty cool record.

www.wendymcneil.com

— By Annie Clifford

Serena Ryder

Unlikely Emergency
Universal
7697422852

With the voice that belies a maturity beyond her years, Serena certainly has taken her audiences by storm. She's got soul, she's got control, she'd win the Canadian Idol competition hands down but has too much integrity to try. *Unlikely Emergency* is an album of power ballad-esque love songs (mostly) produced by Hawksley Workman. It's lyrically interesting — *I'm not saving grace / I used it all the time / sometimes it gets misplaced / denies that it is mine* — and they recorded it live off the floor in three days! Album highlights are the hand-clapping, foot-stomping *Sing*, the bluesy, nicely non-sensical *Every Single Day*, and an accapella cover of *At Last*. Ryder's got an amazing amount of energy, talent, and potential. I'm certain that she's got a spectacular career ahead of her, and she's got nowhere to go but up. Hopefully the next album will be less power-ballad filled, preferably produced by someone else (Hawksley Workman is a great songwriter, but it would be nice to hear how she works with someone else, someone less rock, more folk, more art).

— By Mary Beth Carty

Bob Evans

The Voice In The Grain
Acoustic Tone Music
ATCD002

Bob Evans and Don Ross are the only two Canadians to have won the prestigious 'National Fingerpicking Champion' title in Winfield, Kansas. This isn't some obscure redneck hygiene festival this is a serious solo instrumental guitar feat. So with this in mind and with a swag of Don Ross records in my collection for comparison I pressed 'play' to survey *The Voice of the Grain*.

The opening self-penned track *The Slippery Slope* promptly informed me that some awards are worth the winning or maybe that should read, some award-winning winners are worth the listening.

Bob Evans is a tremendous guitarist.

This record hits the spot with six original compositions and half a dozen adaptations of popular classics including *Yesterday*, *Got to Get You Into My Life*, *Christmas Time Is Here* and *The Theme from Peter Gunn*.

Bob effuses the melodic spirit of Chet Atkins and the fiery verve of Tommy Emmanuel with his own sense of humor here. Never self indulgent, each track is quick to the richly spirited and melodic chase. So, back to *The Slippery Slope* — a happy-go-lucky double stopping strut which is full of that dynamic yet relaxed phrasing all guitarists aspire for while we listeners get that auto-toe-tapping. The Lennon-McCartney adaptations are faithful to those timeless melodies and, gratefully, Evans

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PENGUIN
LIVES
Autumn
2004

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saves the melancholy for the liner notes. It is this restraint from excessive ornamentation and flashy playing that makes tracks like the stealthy onomatopoeic feline mid-night bluesy prowling of *M. Nelsons' Cat's Meow*, the meat and potatoes fare of *Dickie's Blues* and the title track, *The Voice in the Grain* such fine listening.

This record plays rich in timbre and never goes against the grain while the Sitka Spruce sacrificed for Bob Evan's guitar completes a shady grove in heaven where this record possibly enjoys high rotation in the pearly appointed lobby.

— By Dave Macdonald

David Essig

A Stone in my Pocket
Peregrin Songs PM12032

Late last year, in the dead of a Thetis Island winter, David Essig went into his small studio armed with his guitars, mandolins and some (according to the liner notes) miscellany. He was accompanied by Oliver Schrorer on violin and Tobin Frank on bass and accordion. They laid down 30 tracks that encompass David's 35-year career in the wonderful world of folk music.

Was it worth the effort, this musing on his musical life? Definitely! 28 of Essig's old songs get new, sparse, and tasty treatments from the trio.

The arrangements highlight his musicianship but

mostly they showcase the songs. Are there more powerful songs than *Quiet Money* and *The Hate Walks*.

But it's not all resting on laurels and looking back. Two new songs prove he is still adding to his amazing canon. *Walk Back Into Town* is a stunning song. It should be used in songwriting classes. He takes the simple phrase "walk back into town" and makes it resonate from blissful youthful summer nostalgia to chilling winter horrors in subsequent verses. Taking the voice of an RCMP officer, David tells the story of what occurred one recent Saskatchewan winter where: "I was the judge and jury, there was no appeal/I turned a cold quarter section into a killing field"

A Stone in My Pocket is a wonderful recording and serves as a reminder of what a treasure David Essig is as a songwriter and how lucky we are to have him

— By les siemieniuk

Issa Bagayogo

Tassoumakan
Six Degrees — 657036 1103-2MJ

'Techno' Issa was one of the first to blend traditional Malian melodies and rhythmic samples. On his third album, he skips from traditional, bluesy melodies to echoing dubs, mind bending beats, and joyous, refined Afro-pop.

Tassoumakan translates into 'Voice of Fire'. A more apt metaphor might be milk and honey, as his smooth, dusky voice tones down the heat generated by the electronics. He is producing some of the absolutely best electronica-based world beat

available today as he effortlessly segues from downtempo (*Kanou*), to afrobeat (*Diana Don*), to house (*Kalan Nege*), all the while muttering in the best imitation of the talking blues, sounding like a mix of Ali Farka Toure and Son House.

Tassoumakan also plays several instruments, most notably the kamele n'goni, a type of lute, featured more heavily on his previous albums. This time the focus is more on the mixing board, providing a different but no less satisfying experience. A must have for fans of electronic, African, modern, or just music in general.

— By Shawna Biamonte

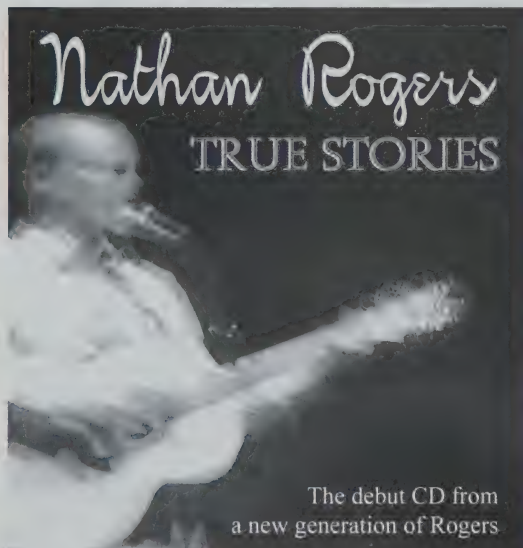
Steve Singh

I Will Not Break Your Heart
Independent

Toronto-based singer-songwriter Steve Singh promising debut is catchy, rootsy pop with a bit of country thrown in. The only misstep is the bland *NYC vs Jeffrey Brown*, but this made up for by the sweet *Twice Her Size*, *Half Her Age*, and the witty *A Little Squirrel Like You*. The atmospheric *What A Lazy Week* reminds me of the Cowboy Junkies, with the ethereal erhu, a Chinese violin, threaded through. The album ends with *The Party Is Over*, which reads like a dirge but sounds like the roots-rock piano ballads of the seventies. A fresh voice on the indie scene that surely won't remain indie for long.

www.stevesingh.com

— By Shawna Biamonte



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**Dynamite and 'Dozers
the 2nd CD...**



Maria Dunn

We Were Good People
Distant Whisper Music – MARCD03

Blighted by the worst excesses of prog rock – the murkiest, festering pool in the mighty river of music – the concept album rarely pokes its head above the parapet these days. *Tales from The Topographic Ocean* anyone? Or, how about *Larks' Tongues in Aspic*. No! Didn't think so. Well Marie Dunn has made a concept album but don't expect a caped Rick Wakeman putting in an appearance.

The theme of *We Were Good People* focuses on the hardships, resilience and triumphs of immigrants and working people in Western Canada during the desperate days of the 1930s. It's an ambitious and heartfelt project full of uplifting, heart-breaking and sometimes angry writing. Thoroughly researched, the topics range from hunger marches to racial discrimination. But as bleak as these issues appear, Dunn often uses humour and gaiety, without sounding trite, to offset the seriousness. Backed as usual by her mighty talented pals, The McDades – Shannon Johnson among them, whose production is both economic and positively fitting. Dunn always comes up with at least one song that will knock your emotions into a cocked hat and this time it's the heartrending *Can You Blame The Poor Miner* – a lament highlighting an understanding for the foibles of a working man at day's end. While her largely one-dimensional voice might solicit the odd quibble, such pettiness would clearly miss the point. The medium here is the message – and as such, much of this recording deserves to pass into the universal folk tradition. Yeah, it's that good.

– By Roddy Campbell

Tim Eriksen

Every Sound Below
Applesseed
APR CD 1080

Known for his role in Cordelia's Dad and, more recently, for the various roles he has played on the *Cold Mountain* soundtrack, Tim Eriksen's second solo album is more of an antiquarian project – an album of somber traditional or traditional-sounding songs. Recorded live in mono by Dakota Dave Hull with one microphone and no overdubs, this is an austere solo album with Eriksen singing and accompanying himself on guitar, fiddle, and banjo.

Every Sound Below features many old songs and shape-note hymns he discovered in New England, including several from the Anne and Frank Warner collection – one of which is a medley of two Civil War ballads. Eriksen performs an especially gripping a capella version of *Two Sisters*. *Omie*

Wise is another bleak but gripping ballad about a murdered woman that the singer discovered from a Roscoe Holcomb recording. The only well-known song is *Careless Love*. Eriksen also impresses with his overtone singing on *John Colby's Hymn* and briefly at the end of *Every Sound Below*, an original song. A chilling but highly intriguing recording.

– By Paul-Émile Comeau

Tinariwen

Amassakoul
Independent Records IRL 014

Herdsmen, traders and raiders for centuries, the Tuareg of the southern Sahara were finally cornered in the late 20th century by drought, and the formation of national borders that totally disrupted their way of life. Some of these nomadic people ended up in refugee camps, while others decided to fight for some kind of homeland to preserve their people's rights and culture. This un-winnable struggle was called off with the signing of a peace agreement in the mid 1990's. Emerging from the ranks of the resistance movement comes Tinariwen, a savvy group of ex-freedom fighters who laid down their guns in favour of guitars, and play gritty and engaging desert songs. The influence of western popular music is evident, with hints of Hooker in the rasping electric guitar lines that weave through indigo textures and undulating grooves. It's all a unique blend of traditional sounds couched in modern terms, up to and including a taste of near hip hop on one track. There's a lot of unison singing, with two women prominent although a couple of the guys seem to write the songs and sing lead.

Tuareg is in fact a derogatory Arab term meaning "abandoned by God". These people actually refer to themselves as Imashaghren, meaning "the noble and the free". That fierce pride is evident in the lyrics, sung in Tamashek, but translated into English and French in the sleeve notes. Themes are varied, from a lament for the unquenched thirsts felt in a desert night to a call for the people of the dunes to stand together in face of their many

hardships.

Tinariwen are a riveting group, and their music is powerful and entrancing, highly listenable, and well worth tracking down.

– By David Ingram

Ben Arnold

Calico
True North – TND 333

Lyrical, this Philadelphia singer-songwriter has a solid ability to paint pictures, but for the most part, *Calico* fails to bring those pictures to life. Perhaps it's the flat production, or maybe a lack of musical risk-taking, but with Arnold's writing skills, this album should offer a lot more.

– By Martin Kemp

Shiyani Ngcobo

Introducing
World Music Network/Intro
101CD

Vakoka

Introducing
World Music Network/Intro
102CD

Sukke

Introducing
World Music Network/Intro
103CD

The World Music Network, celebrating ten years of Rough Guide compilations, has now launched a new label/series. The goal is to present exceptional artists from around the world who are unknown outside their native country. This is not to say, however, that these artists are already well established locally as recording artists. Judging by the first three titles in the series this impressive new initiative should quickly find a loyal following.

Introducing Shiyani Ngcobo presents a great musician and singer from South Africa whose musical genre of choice is maskanda, a name that refers to traditional migrant Zulu music that has evolved into a kind of modern pop music. The album was very tastefully produced in a week with just a handful of very adept supporting musicians. Ngcobo himself is marvelous both as singer and guitarist and on a few tracks he plays the igogogo, a home-made guitar made with a five-litre oil can. This album is absolutely essential for fans of South African music.

The Vakoka project was a little more complicated but the results are just as beguiling. The idea was to join together a 'dream team' of Madagascar's best traditional-type musicians and composers, allow them a couple of months to pool their creativity and hone their collective chops, and then record an album of roots-based musical magic. With such participants as Hanitra of Tarika, and other respected musicians, expectations were high but the results live up to them.

Sukke is a trio of prominent klezmer musicians from Europe (Great Britain, Netherlands,

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PUBLISHED
EIGHT
Autumn
2004

Recordings

Germany) who have all been influenced by the teachings of their spiritual master. They each have a wealth of experience on their respective instruments (clarinet, accordion, upright bass), having played in various groups and theatrical productions. The group plays straightforward klezmer without any of the fancy experimental footwork that is now so common. Sukke's music sounds traditional, as half of it is, but the trio plays so crisply that much of the group's music seems well-adapted to the modern world.

— By Paul-Émile Comeau

J-W Jones Blues Band

My Kind Of Evil

NorthernBlues — NBM0021

There's nothing like young lions coming in to the stable to shake things up. Studied guitar whiz JW and his band do more than their lion's share on this slick release. Sticking closely to the template of West Coast swing, their only crime might be in following it too closely. The coup of enticing Kim Wilson to not only play harp, but

to sing back-up and produce, is a sizeable one. JW's vocals hold their own yet Colin James and Wilson cover off two leads each of the 14 tracks (the sweetness of Roxanne Potvin's contribution might be investigated for the future as the quality of JW's music has often been offset by the calibre

of the vocals). And the music does shine on many levels: his *Ain't Gonna Lie* busts out of the box in a fresh way, while two more originals demonstrate the band's sizeable potential — *You Can't Fool Me* takes a soulful hold (especially on JW's vocal), while the blistering swing instrumental, *Slow Down*, raises the bar in three speed zones. Of note is Wilson's laidback vocal groove on Fats Domino's *Blue Monday*. Jones' guitar contributions (mixed well forward, wisely), demonstrate an exceptional feel for the music and undeniable star power, despite his tendency to sit back more than a band-leader needs to. Evil is good.

— By Eric Thom

Po' Girl

Vagabond Lullabies

NorthernBlues — 067003038621

There has been a mini explosion in great young alt country roots performers in Canada in the last few years. Cases in point: The Be Good Tanyas, The Wailin' Jennies, Nathan, Rae Spoon and, of course, Po' Girl.

Vagabond Lullabies is the second release from Po' Girl featuring Trish Klein (Be Good Tanyas), Allison Russell (Fear of Drinking) and Diona Davies. And a lovely mix of voices and musical talent it is. Laid back and soulful arrangements featuring banjo, acoustic and electric guitars, harmonica, fiddle and mandolin underline the sleepy melancholy songs perfectly.

But the most compelling feature is the wonderful

vocals. Trish and Allison work together beautifully and the whole album washes over you gently. Under-lying the deceptive quiet moodiness of the songs is a tension and threat of really breaking out. They never really do but that's perhaps why it is so appealing. For some it may be too much of the same thing — a one note symphony — but it is a rich and full note.

— By les siemienik

Various Artists

Creole Bred: A Tribute To Creole & Zydeco

Vanguard Records

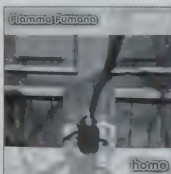
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You might expect to find second and third generation Creole and Zydeco artists, like Keith Frank, Rosie Ledet, Sean Ardoin, Curley Taylor, Nathan Williams & The Zydeco Cha-Chas, on this tribute to the likes of Clifton Chenier, Canray Fontenot and Alphonse Ardoin, and you do (and they're real good). Likewise, it's not a stretch to have two tunes covered by Taj Mahal, who's proved adept at everything from blues, r & b, soul, New Orleans strut, to world music collaborations with the likes of Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Toumani Diabate, and The Hawaiian Hula Blues Band. The gospel group, Sweet Honey & The Rock is an imaginative leap, perhaps, but their cover of *Mon Homme Est Pas Rivé* is fine. With David Hidalgo, from Los Lobos, you might think you're getting into stranger territory but he pulls it off as well. The real stunners on this disc are the numbers by New

Fiamma Fumana

Just off a triumphant summer festival tour, Fiamma Fumana play trad. & original music from their *home* in Northern Italy, led by three young women, fueled by strong coffee and electronic beats.

"...(they) cross genres and geography in a single bound." — Chris Nickson



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York Art rockers Tom Tom Club (the rhythm section of Talking Heads) two numbers by Cyndi Lauper, and one by Michelle Shocked. I know, Cyndi Lauper and Michelle Shocked on a Zydeco record. Sacrilege? Surprisingly, no. If you didn't already know who they were, you'd never guess here. Michelle Shocked's version of *Paper In My Shoe* is the funkiest track on the disc. Lauper's voice is unrecognizable. Credit the great songs, dynamite back-up musicians, or producer Ann Savoy's kinky taste, but if you put this disc in a mix with more authentic Zydeco and Creole tracks, you'll probably like these just as well, or even better, and then be dumbfounded when you see who they're by. Unexpectedly good.

– By Barry Hammond

Jez Lowe & The Bad Pennies

Doolally

Tantobie – TTRCD 105

Jez Lowe, from County Durham, north-eastern England, is widely regarded as his country's finest writer of songs in a traditional style. Does *Doolally* maintain his reputation? Well, *Vikings* is destined to find its way into a lot of northern musicians' set lists pretty quickly. It's an hilarious look at how these Scandinavian invaders might find things if they returned today.

Other standouts include *Hoi Polloi* – everyone knows their place in the class system, even nowadays – and *Sugar Water Sunday*, which harkens back to 18th century fairs, and features some exemplary Northumbrian piping from Andy May.

Regina Inside looks at the irony of a royal visit to the scene of one of the bitterest battles of the Miners Strike of 20 years ago. Royalty treats it as though nothing had happened. Everyone should be happy to see their queen? Touch their forelocks and bow down to their betters? I don't think so.

Jez also turns his pen to subjects like suspected child molesters (*Keep them Bairns Away*), the post 9/11 world (*Bloodstained*), and the remarkable story of an Italian immigrant to Durham whose father had left Italy to flee the fascists. He was deemed to be daft – or *Doolally*, which is an East Indian expression.

A new Jez Lowe album is always worth a few listens. This one is taking its time to really seep in to my subconscious, but it's often the "sleepers" that make the most lasting impact.

– By Steve Edge

David Darling & The Wulu Bunum

Mudanin Kata

Riverboat – TUGCD1032

American classical cellist David Darling combines the vocals of the Wulu Bunun, an indigenous tribe in the mountains of Taiwan, with his cello and the ambient noises of the fauna surrounding the village it was recorded in. The overall effect is somewhat reminiscent of those new age "sounds of nature" discs. The songs took Darling two years to compose and arrange. And they sound some-



Jez Lowe and his Bad Pennies: Andy May, Kate Bramley and Sean Taylor

what repetitive at first, but some almost take your breath away with their subtle beauty, like *Macilumah*, which is a traditional song for concluding work. Gently threaded with Darling's cello, which is the instrument that most closely mimics the human voice, the effect is stunning. Other songs, alas, simply re-inforce the broing "new age" stereotype.

– By Shawna Biamonte

The Buccaneers

Basement Monkey

BigNote – OCMB002

The Buccaneers, augmented by several guests, make affable if non-descript music. There is nothing really wrong with their brand of Celtic-pop excepting a distinct lack of meat and gristle in the broth. Nothing sticks. The music is not so painfully dry as to induce nosebleeds but neither will it sustain mere listening once this damn review is written.

– By Donald Teplysky

The Dixie Hummingbirds

Diamond JubilationRouder/Treasure

Records 116 61 2181-2

The 75th Anniversary of a vocal gospel group is something to celebrate. And on this jubilation celebrating an American institution, Garth Hudson, Levon Helm, Dr. John, and Larry Campbell back the Hummingbirds with energy and verve. There's reason they have been around for 75 years in one incarnation or another.

– By Les siemieniuk

The Beaton Family of Mabou

CapeBreton Fiddle and Piano Music

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

SFW40507 2004

A mix of old favourites, new compositions including reels, strathspeys, jigs and other favorites,

from Cape Breton's Beaton Family. There's eight of them on this recording: fiddlers, pianists, and dancers all, and boy can they play. There are absolutely no frills or studio trickery in evidence here – just unprocessed and pure fiddle and piano music with foot percussion providing the rhythm.

Donald Angus Beaton, who died in 1982, was the family patriarch and one of the best loved dance fiddlers of his time. Accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth MacEachon Beaton (now in her 80's), they made the renowned *The Beatons of Mabou* in 1978. This is the 2004 update on that tradition featuring sons, daughters and cousins and it does them great service. Sure I'd prefer to hear this music live in a Cape Breton pub with pounding feet clapping and cheering for accompaniment but until I finally get over there (yes I'm accepting invitations) this will serve well. Now pass me the Scotch.

– By Tim Readman

Various Artists

Hold Your Ground: Volume III: Enough

Activist – CD 03

Hold Your Ground links community development with the socially-conscious music of some of Alberta's best-loved singers and musicians. For the first time, claim the organizers, concrete community activism will be linked to the music that inspires it. This release features various musical styles and themes but all the contributions were created to both entertain and provoke thought.

Volume III kicks off in blazing style with The Craig Korth and Julie Kerr Band's rip-roaring banjo-speeding *Troubled Times* followed by No Guff's charming *My Ukelele Helps Me Beat The Blues*. The Corb Lund Band are in their usual fine form on the talkin' blues of *Expectation and the Blues*. Jenny Allen shows why she is so highly thought of with a gorgeous vocal on *Old Ways* – why is she not famous? Probably not annoyingly precious and pretentious enough for today's roots

market I suspect [*Splutter! Cough! What???...The Ed!*]. The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir weigh in with a stirring rendition of *They Can Make it rain Bombs*.

This is for a great cause, features some fine artists and has lots of great music inside. Cowboy hats off to the Albertans for pulling it together for the third time. Power to the people. Wake up BC!

www.cd.activist.ca

— By Tim Readman

Guy Davis

Legacy

Red House Records – RHR CD 175

Guy Davis is a curious hybrid. He is part blues-ologist, part well rounded creative artist and part ordinary guy. He was raised in a middle class family in New York but his roots going back to his grandparents' days are in the rural south and involve scrapes with the KKK and the railroad cops. He is also an accomplished actor and a playwright. The first words you hear on this CD are "Rap is what's happening, blues ain't got nothing". What ensues is a duet between Davis and his rap-loving son Martial on the relative merits of the two genres. And a pretty entertaining little jaunt it is too. After that is all about the blues

There's no doubting his genuine love of the

blues and his fierce loyalty to preserving its influence. He is actively involved with all sorts of projects to help improve the lot of the disadvantaged. He is a stellar live performer. However for me this collection falls a bit short. Maybe it's a wee bit too safe and polite, maybe it lacks originality. Funny enough I think it maybe just isn't quite blue enough for my taste.

— By Tim Redman

Various Artists

Sailor's Songs and Sea Shanties

Highpoint Recordings – HPO 6007

I'm just getting my land legs again after reviewing *Classic Maritime Music* from Smithsonian Folkways for the last edition of this esteemed journal and here I am feeling like Sir Francis Chichester at the end of his round the world sailing trip. This kind of material is a great source for singers who want to include a few songs of the sea in their repertoire and is a valuable and informative historical document of the genre. Trouble is that listening to 26 consecutive songs of the sea sets me off bobbing like a booze soaked cork around my living room. Artists on parade here include A.L. Lloyd, Ewan McColl, Stan Kelly, The Watersons, Ian Campbell, Peter Bellamy and Roy Harris. The songs are all either work songs to help with doing whatever it is they do round the capstan and such, or songs of diversion where the usual euphemisms for been-at-sea-and-want-a-shag proliferate like seagulls round the chip shop dustbin.

Before long my mind is overrun with images of bearded high school geography teachers dressed in Arran sweaters and Cornish fishermen's smocks having a rollicking good sing-song down the local (and you can bet there's a few Morris Dancers amongst them!).

Don't let a wee landlubber like me put you off though. This will go down really well with all fans of the sea shanty and other songs of the sea.

— By Tim Readman

Danielle Martineau

Les Secrets Du Vent

Dama – 401

Québec accordion player Danielle Martineau is well established as a rejuvenating force on the province's music scene, not only as a musician of great talent, but also as a composer of new material very much in the tradition. The varied influences of the many cultures that came together along the banks of the St Lawrence can be heard in her melodic and powerful tunes. The spirit and swing of her compositions is entrancing, her accordion playing masterful, and her accompanists on Breton pipes, violin, flute, mandolin and guitar are also to be lauded on this strong album of original pieces. Some of the melodies have an Irish tinge to them, and there's also a hint of French café music, and of course a Québécoise sound and feel to most of the tracks. This disc is full of highlights, and is perfect listening for an enjoyable evening of chatter or reflection.

— By David Ingram

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Various Artists

Rough Guide To Fado

World Music Network – RGNET 1117CD

Misia and Mariza, two of the best known fadistas outside of Portugal, get a nod in the liner notes but are not featured on the album. That honour is reserved for some younger stars in the makings, like the talented Joana Amendoeira. And Ana Moura, whose smoky and passionate vocals evoke the golden age of fado and Herminia Silva. The real discovery is 32 year old Christina Branco. Accompanied by the standard fado trio (Portuguese guitar, guitar and bass), she adds a delicious twist to the traditional words, adding melodies that echo jazz, blues, and – dare I say it – traditional British folk styles. With so many people interpreting and re-interpreting the same traditional songs, how refreshing to hear someone make them sound fresh and new.

The old guard is also well represented, etching a timeline from the great guitarist and composer Artur Paredes (b. 1899) to the revered Herminia Silva and Amalia Rodrigues. This is a fabulous, if very traditional, introduction to fado for the uninitiated.

– By Shawna Biamonte

Gangbé Brass Band

Togbé

Contre Jour – 009

Benin's Gangbé Brass Band have really pulled things together on their second album. First discovered by Lo'Jo, the 10-piece group follows a small tradition of African brass, but hardly find themselves restricted to that idea. The vocals (chanted call-and-response) billow into horn and percussion lines, all underpinned by a deftly-blown euphonium, for something quite exhilarating, almost an ancestor of the New Orleans style and eminently soulful with more than a touch of jazz. *Ekui Nawo*, for example, simmers with Monk-inflected bebop before taking a turn back to Africa. The music, which is sophisticated in both arrangements and execution, covers a lot of territory, but its heartbeat is resolutely African. Multiple layers of percussion propelled creating the polyrhythmic spring to keep it all lively. And while they function primarily as a unit, the record contains some great individual moments, such as Lucien Gbaguidi's swinging sax solo on *Ema Dja*. On *Gangbé Vile* the horns vanish altogether, leaving simply voices and percussion, and it works perfectly as a statement of intent before heading into the closing cut, *Guignon*. On *Togbé*, the Gangbé Brass Band show how far they've come.

– By Chris Nickson

Ric Denis

Tadoussac

ZSun Records

Fleet of pick, emboldened of strum and fearless of fingerstyle is Ric Denis. From the strut-funk of the opening track *Gone By 8.00* to the soothing Don Rossesque *Becalmng Me* with fretless bass



Dyad

accompaniment, *Tadoussac* (a small 400-year-old Quebec town at the mouth of the Saguenay river) is a warm and engaging destination.

His fourth release recorded at Mamie's Diner serves up eleven dishes and you won't find a bland morsel on this menu. There are a few odd surprises amongst the sustaining fare though including a very weird synthesized vocalization on *Schmoozin' With The Guru* and numerous drop-in clicks and miss-edits on track 10, not good, bad.

It certainly wasn't enough to put me off the banquet but was food for thought and made me check under the lettuce a second time. By then the closing track had soothed me by, a sweet open tuned lullaby named *Lament For Josh*, and my suspicions were confirmed that head chef Don Ross once ran Ric's kitchen. This is a good album that left me feeling satisfied not withstanding the bitter aftertaste of a few fishy drop-ins.

(www.ricdenis.com)

– By David MacDonald

Dyad

Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone
Copperspine Records –CPS 724

This one almost slipped under the radar. Almost. Neglecting *Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone* amounts to nothing short of criminal negligence. Clearly cut from the same cloth as *Boiled In Lead*, Cordelia's Dad and early Uncle Tupelo, Vancouver trio Dyad's approach to traditional American music is sometimes stark, often chilling but absolutely beguiling in its entirety.

Clearly they have a healthy regard for the more obscure folk songs preserved largely in the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains. All acoustic, Dyad brandish the interactive twin fiddles of Stephani Custers and Shiho Mizmoto with intoxicating verve – witness the utterly compelling *Early, Early In The Spring*. Not to be outdone, Kori Miyayishi's economic but confident claw-hammer banjo picking makes welcome respite from the flash bluegrass boys who must surely get paid by the note. It's also fascinating to hear their convincing American versions of British folk songs – only *The Trooper And The Maid* is now the *Soldier's Horse* and *Tramps And Hawkers*. *Hiram Hubbard*. The cheeky beggars even retitled the instrumental

Ryestraw into *Getting George Bush Upstairs*. With unwavering belief and boldness, Dyad have made an album of exceptional intrigue.

– By Roddy Campbell

Nathan

Jimson Weed

Nettwerk – 30372 2

Winnipeg's Nathan have good recipe for making fresh and original music. They take dark, somewhat twisted lyrics, sweet melodies, great harmonies and trust the band to keep the pot boiling. Their sound has elements of country, bluegrass, folk and pop. Singers Keri McTighe and Shelley Marshall both have beguiling voices which blend together effortlessly throughout this recording. The instrumentation includes the obvious – guitar, bass, banjo and drums augmented by great slide playing, and unexpected bursts of accordion, tuba, Theremin and trumpet. McTighe wrote all but two of the tracks with Marshall supplying the others. Themes include love gone bad (*Bad Idea, Stone*); regret (*I Left My Station*), truth and lies (*Jimson Weed*) and the road (*Gasoline*). It's such a pleasure to hear a band willfully cooking up something with such a unique flavour. Yes, Nathan have good recipe and this is outstanding fare.

– By Tim Readman

Chris Stout

First of the Darkenin'

Greentrax – CDTRAX 257

Fiddlers seem to grow like heather in the moorlands of the Picts, and bow-man Chris Stout is another in a long line of blossoming players from the Shetlands. He displays a lyrical approach on a mix of traditional tunes, originals, and pieces by contemporary Scottish composers. An innovator too, his newer pieces have lots of spring about them. One Norwegian hymn makes for a gorgeous air, another cut is a jazzy jumpabout of great wit, while the title track is an intriguing bit of improv as his spectacular fiddle winds about Ewan Vernal's strong bass, Catriona McKay's tingling harp, and Fraser Fife's stirring sax.

Rampant on the reels, Chris really shines on the

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airs though, and *Da Day Dawn* is a knock-out from the Shetland canon of sad tunes and worth the price of the disc for this cut alone. This release from Stout and co presents an approachable strain of modern trad, sensitive and stimulating music played very well indeed.

— By David Ingram

Various Artists

The Rough Guide to Brazil: Bahia
World Music Network RGNET 1135 CD

You can credit David Byrne for first introducing the sounds of modern Brazilian dance music to the world. Now roughly 15 years later, Rough Guide follows up with this anthology of tropicalia, axe and samba-reggae. As with all the Rough Guide recordings, *Bahia* is a mixed bag of sounds and a good all-around starter kit to Brazilian-Afro fusion.

— By Charles Mandel

Buddy & Julie Miller

Love Snuck Up

Hightone Records — HCD 8170

If you've only heard Buddy Miller as a guitar player on Steve Earle's *El Corazon* tour, or as a member of Emmylou Harris's *Spyboy* band, or producing Jimmie Dale Gilmore's *One Endless Night*, or only heard tales about his wife, Julie's, already near-legendary solo singer/songwriter outings like *Blue Pony*, and *Broken Things*, then this

is the perfect disc to catch this husband and wife team in their full glory. Producer Bob Stone has compiled this best-of collection from four of Miller's solo discs, two of Julie's, and their previous collaboration. It's a powerful assembly showcasing both of their formidable writing abilities. Buddy Miller's unerring instincts as a producer, his potent guitar playing, and the dead-on emotional honesty of their combined voices. Call it country-rock, Americana, alt-country, or whatever, it's the best of seven discs all in one package. Pure Nashville by way of Austin, New York and L.A. gold. There's even a nod to gospel with Pop Staples' *It's Been A Change*. Top stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

Dave Alvin

Ashgrove

Yep Roc records YEP 2075

The two sides of Dave Alvin: Dave Alvin the former rockin' Blaster and Dave Alvin the award-winning Grammy recording artist of American folk songs. Crazy and wild. Thoughtful and mellow. Which side are you on boy; which side are you on.

Both it seems — and that's a hard deal to pull off. But pull it off he does in fine Dave Alvin style. This album could be his best ever, mixing the thoughtful balladeer and the unabashed rocker.

The Man in the Bed is an achingly sad story of an old man bed-ridden in life but not in his head. Dave sings of all lost loves in his whiskey soaked baritone in *Rio Grande*. He reminisces on a musician's life, in the melancholy title track, and on all the musicians that inspired him at the legendary

Los Angeles club, Ashgrove. Then he steps up and rocks it out on the bluesy, terrific *Out of Control* and *Black Haired Girl*, featuring some lovely slide guitar work by Greg Leisz

Ashgrove is a wonderfully mixed, potent, cocktail of the best of Dave Alvin. Shaken and stirred to a fine, fine tasty mix.

— By Iles siemieniuk

Autorickshaw

Four Higher

Talla-Wallah Records TW002

Autorickshaw is another failed exercise in well-meaning intention. Mining East Indian music for inspiration, this Toronto quartet ironically ends up sounding less authentic than Bill Laswell, who has already previously covered this genre before. I say ironic, because Autorickshaw includes a reasonably talented East Indian singer, Suba Sankaran, who actually at her best on a song like *Unjalur* can sing scat like Ursula Dudziak.

But rather than produce the kind of lyrical jazz this group shows it is capable of making, they persist in playing interminable academic exercises such as ragas, which they add in patronizing brackets, feature three-beat cycles of eight-beat cycles — as if the average listener could care less.

Where this band excels is when they launch into such classic material as Dizzy Gillespie's *A Night In Tunisia* and Rich Brown and Debashis Sinha mesh respectively on bass and drums, while Sankaran sings over top. The band also has a skilled tabla player in Ed Hanley, who shows his stuff on a solo number and then again in *Chennai*



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Oct. 15	Tom Russell	(USA)
Oct. 15	Ruthie Foster	(USA)
Oct. 29	Vin Garbutt	(UK)
Nov. 5	The Duhks / The Laws	(CDN)
Nov. 19	Alberta Bound	
	Songwriters in the Round	(AB)
Nov. 26	The Waybacks	(USA)

Jan. 21	Connie Kaldor / Roy Forbes	(CDN)
Jan. 28	The Swiftys / Tim Hus and The Rocky Mountain Two	
Feb. 11	The Austin Lounge Lizards	(USA)
Feb. 25	Merle Hagard Tribute	
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Five-O. Unfortunately, Autorickshaw doesn't always allow themselves to let it hang out – a shame, because that's when they best perform.

– By Charles Mandel

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Between Here and Gone
Columbia – CK 86619

The commercial success seems to have diminished. For whatever reason, you don't hear new Mary Chapin Carpenter songs as often on country radio. Whatever, *Between Here and Gone* is a wonderful album. It's just so great to journey through her melancholy world with her aching beautiful voice as a guiding angel. Her themes of loss, mortality, grief and renewal is a gentle exploration of journeys taken and journeys anticipated – finally arriving in *Elysium*.

"I could show you the arrows and circles I drew/I didn't have a map, It's the best I could do/On the fly and on the run"

Is it her best? Probably not but it's still better than most of the stuff I've heard in the last year. Any Mary Chapin Carpenter recording is a terrific experience and this new one just adds another shining jewel to an already great collection of work.

– By les siemienik

Gibb Todd

Goin' Home
Compass records 7 4374 2

Gibb Todd is a recent immigrant to Australia from Scotland masking a journey made by many others. He's a pretty good songwriter in the Scottish tradition – witness the beautiful *Canada*. Despite good credentials, good material and good accompanists this album sounds tired, lifeless and dated as if it was produced in a folk club in Britain in 1960.

– By les siemienik

La Bottine Souriante

J'ai Jamais Tant Ri
Mille-Pattes

J'ai Jamais Tant Ri (I Never Laughed So Much) marks the first recording by La Bottine Souriante, Quebec's leading roots music band, since the departure of Yves Lambert and Michel Bordeleau. Unfortunately the absence of the group's two singers and longtime members is all-too-evident. It isn't that their successors Eric Beaudry and Pierre-Luc Dupuis are musically inferior; but it takes more than talent and technique to replace the charismatic Lambert, who fronted La Bottine for 26 years, and a multi-instrumentalist of Bordeleau's versatility.

There are other reasons, however, why the album is a disappointment after the brilliant *Cordial*. On several tracks the band's four brass players tend to be too assertive – on the set of reels *L'Homme à Deux Femmes* they even become the primary focus, with the fiddle and accordion lead reduced to a series of tedious loops. Elsewhere the Latin montuno-style piano accompaniment of

Pierre Bélisle also draws too much attention to itself. And on the song *Si l'Hiver Peut Prendre* the attendant bonhomie and chatter sounds a tad forced, as well as being over-familiar.

The man ultimately responsible for these shortcomings, producer and saxophonist Jean Fréchette, is also the inspired musical director whose horn section powered La Bottine to international stardom in the '90s. The brass is currently showing a disturbing propensity to wag the whole dog. Now a 10-piece with the addition of dancer Sandy Silva, La Bottine in concert remains massively impressive, but its studio work may be slipping into complacency – with a touch of self-parody.

– By Tony Montague

Chuck Brodsky

Color Came One Day
Chuck Brodsky Records – CB 030

Some reviews just write themselves – the aptly-titled *Color Came One Day* among them. Affectionately produced by J.P. Cormier and recorded in his studio on Cape Breton, it emphasizes in its entirety what a wonderful insightful storyteller Chuck Brodsky truly is. Nobody else comes close currently. Nobody. *Color Came One Day* includes some epic characters but no baseball songs. His marvelous compilation *Baseball Ballads* took care of that topic for the time being. Instead, he offers *The Miracle In The Hills* – a lovingly told tale of a doctor and his wife bringing comfort and education to the once remote mountain people of North Carolina. And then there's the epic *The Goat Man* – an extraordinary account of the ultimate survivor, *The Room Over The Bar* hilariously details a chamber from hell (actually, Ireland). An astute and wry political commentator, Brodsky's *Seven Miles Upwind* and *Trees Falling* succeed in creating outrage because of the disarmingly gentle delivery. The absolute show-stoppers, though, include a peep behind the facade of a model suburb, *Forest Hills Sub*, and the deadpan,

commentary on the ongoing undermining of America's democratic and civil rights, *Dangerous Times*. A heroic and gloriously rewarding disc, this, from start to finish. Just buy it.

– By Roddy Campbell

David Ross MacDonald

Far From Here
Independent – drm0404

Melody is not the job of a drummer. Dave Ross MacDonald, drummer for the Wafs, however, has a delicate understanding of the keen use of melody in a folk song. His second solo release, *Far From Here*, is a sweet excursion through stories of youth, oppression, longing, fear and the geology of the heart. Have the years creating pulsing rhythms behind a drum kit had an effect on the finger picking guitar style MacDonald chooses to carry his lines of poetry? Maybe he just understands the intricacies of a fine piece of music. Either way be thankful that the Waif downtime has allowed this quiet gentleman to step forward on the stage.

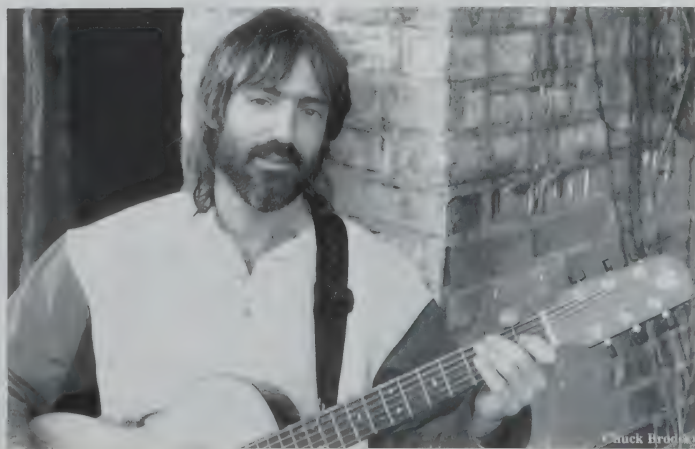
(www.cdbaby.com)

– By Chris Martin

Eccodek

More Africa In Us
Socan BM004

Eccodek is Toronto musician Andrew McPherson with help from a few friends, most notably Rwandan vocalist Ignace Nürushwamaboko. McPherson has got the whole Bill Laswell-Manu Dibango-Acid Jazz groove down pat. His songs burble along over a layer of repetitive African-like phrases, the drum programming slapping down the infectious beat. For extra measure, McPherson includes a couple of grinding dub numbers, complete with faux-Jamarian vo-



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cals, and East Indian-styled ragas.

Eccodek is as light as candy floss. His appropriation of different global styles is admittedly slick, but ultimately empty of meaningful content. By the time he hits *100 Drums* with its mechanical beat, he's reduced world music to a cold corporate sound, perhaps an unintentional, ironic comment on the state of globalization in general today.

—By Charles Mandel

Daara J

Boomerang

Wrasse Records — CD91916

Daara J, that's dj man, modern songs from a southern land, this is rap from the African tap, Senegalese, not Yank if you please, the trio hot like a Dakar sun, hip the beats they hop for fun, English, French, Wolof they sang, coming back at you like a boomerang, don't desist don't resist, reggae rap with a Cuban twist, MCs three with a steady beat, torrid in the dust of tropical heat, nobody here a tough talking gangsta, more like cool headed

prangstas, sense of values sense of life, no ho talk no sharp knife, soul harmony bark and chant, not bad mouth heartless rant, sene rap sagna seck and seck, Sgt. Garcia and Rokia on deck, big up these boyz, make a joyful noise, programming guitar jamming, accordion violin flute bass slamming, strut it jig it, easy man to dig it, what a team under the beam, they

burn they cook they steam, end of the day you gotta say, all the way with Daara J.

—By David Ingram

Vassar Clements

Livin' with the Blues

Acoustic Disc

Vassar Clements cuts his first-ever blues album with a range of artists such as Elvin Bishop, Maria Muldaur, Dave Matthews, Roy Rogers, Charlie Musslewhite, Bob Brozman and more. It is a superb album that showcases Clements' inimitable style with a stellar crop of musicians. With slides and slurs, he coaxes more mood from the fiddle in a four-minute song than most people can muster in an entire night. The cuts with Muldaur *Honey Babe Blues*, and *I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle* are highlights, feeling more like they were done live in a skanky blues club than a studio.

—By Bob Remington

Kathryn Tickell Band

Air Dancing

Park Records Prkced72

There can be no disputing Kathryn Tickell's brilliance as an instrumentalist and composer. Over the past twenty years she has put a most eloquent face on the traditional music of England's north east and has lifted the Northumbrian Small Pipe out of relative obscurity to an international audience. But what really shows off her quiet genius is the ability to ever so gently reinvent her sound

with each subsequent recording while keeping the presentation fresh and intriguing.

Happily, *Air Dancing* keeps this process ticking along quite nicely. Each track flows smoothly and seamlessly and lolls the listener off into a special world for a little while. On the opening track, *April Frolie*, I could almost imagine a cook, in her kitchen pondering and planning an ambitious and exotic meal for a large group, but in the end settling on something more indigenous to the region — Craster Kippers and Redesdale Cheese anyone? *Air Dancing* can only be given the highest of recommendations.

—By Rob Menzies

Sam Bush

King of My World

Sugar Hill

SUG-CD-3987

Although he sometimes comes across as a bit too ambitious, his first studio album in five years is strong in no small part due to stellar support from such stalwarts as Jon Randall, Byron House, and Brad Davis, the latter on board for the first time. The album includes three driving bluegrass-jazz instrumentals and most of the actual songs don't veer too far off from straight bluegrass: Jeff Black's *They're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone*; Grandpa Jones' *Eight More Miles to Louisville*; Ed Snodderly's *Majestic*. Johnny Clegg's *Spirit Is the Journey*, on the other hand, is appropriately given a world beat rhythm. *The Mahavishnu Mountain Boys* is obviously an off-handed nod to guitarist

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Guy Davis

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Ruthie Foster w/Cyd Cassone	mar 05
Maria Dunn, John Wort Hannam, & Eileen Lavery	mar 19
Jez Lowe	apr 02

John McLaughlin while an original called *The Wizard of Oz*, the last track, is a tribute to baseball player Ozzie Smith.

— By Paul-Émile Comeau

Noam Pikelný

In the Maze

Compass Records — 4386

Noam Pikelný made his name as a member of the self-identified 'Polyethnic Cajun Slamgrass' group Leftover Salmon. With this recording he has stepped out on his own into more traditional bluegrass territory ably supported by Matt Flinner (mandolin), David Grier (guitar), Todd Phillips (bass), and Gabe Wicher (fiddle). There is ample evidence here of the 'young banjo virtuoso' that is universally applied to him. His playing is clean, clear and precise with a great melodic sensibility and admirable technique. All but two of the tracks on offer are his own compositions and demonstrate a deep understanding of the music's roots as well as a modern contemporary feel.

Fans of ass-kickin' banjo pickin' will find plenty to marvel at here.

— By Tim Readman

B.A. Johnston

In Situation Bad

Dead Bum Productions

With his acoustic guitar and a casio keyboard, B.A. Johnston's hilarious disc is a work of indie-folk-song-writing genius. "I swear I'm going to die alone, listening to my neighbors fuck to Moist CDs," he sings in his crackly yet honest voice. Populated with references to video games, movies, and consumer products, listening to *In Situation Bad* is like hanging out with B.A. and being let in on tones of inside jokes. The album's sparse production is refreshing, and gives the lyrics their due spotlight. If B.A. Johnston ever plays in your town, count yourself among the blessed — go out, buy his CDs, and treat him like the god he is by offering him gifts of shrimp, bubbly, or even a helper monkey. *The first time spending time with you is better than the first time I finished Legend of Zelda...* Same goes for the first time listening to this disc.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Jay Geils, Duke Robillard,

Gerry Beaudoin

New Guitar Summit

Stony Plain Records — SPCD 1301

Oh my, who are these guys?

Okay, they all have heavy reps from other musical incarnations. Jay Geils is the J. Geils from *Whammer Jammer* fame. Robillard we know from *Roomful of Blues*, among other bands, and Beaudoin garnered his share of the spotlight with David Grissman.

Talk about totally diverse backgrounds and here they are playing together on the same album? But, *New Guitar Summit*? Well, they all live in New



England boys and they share a major appreciation of classic jazz and blues à la Charlie Christian and Tal Farlow. And they all have this major fixation with vintage hollow-body electric guitars that deserve the description 'mellifluous'.

Lucky us.

They first began playing as a three-guitarist combo in 1997. Seven years later they're still getting together with drums and a stand up bass to play jazz standards (some are covers, with several written by Gerry Beaudoin). The CD includes an 8-minute concert segment that shows them playing tricky little intros and runs in unison (think of Duane Allman and Dicky Betts — but these are three guys doing it). Throughout the songs they back one another and take turns on exquisite solo after exquisite solo.

Why no one has recorded them before is a mystery. I'm already looking forward to their next album.

— By Stuart Adams

Duke Robillard

Blue Mood

Stony Plain Records SPCD 1300

No surprises here: Duke Robillard runs through his usual repertoire of boogies and shuffles on this tribute to T-Bone Walker. *Blue Mood* features many number of great solos, not the least from Robillard himself on Walker's *You Don't Love Me* and *T-Bone Boogie*, but generally the recording is over-produced. The full horn section treatment here is syrupy and weighs the proceedings down.

Nor have I ever been a fan of Robillard's cartoonish vocal delivery. On *Blue Mood*, every syllable is over-enunciated and comically stretched out.

Fortunately, the man's guitar playing is far more eloquent. Equally sparkling are the saxes of Doug James, Gordon Beadle and Billy Novick. The rhythm section of drummer Mark Teixeira and bass player Jesse Williams is metronome-like in its regularity. Evocative of a particular era, *Blue Mood* is like an old photograph: faded but not without some charm. Robillard fans will love it.

— By Charles Mandel

Clarence "Gatemouth"

Brown

Timeless

Hightone Records

HCD 8174

You'd like to say that he's still got it at 78, but after close to 60 years in the business, his voice simply doesn't have the power to carry the tunes.

The song selection is as eclectic as one would expect from someone who's covered as much musical territory as Brown. Four of the 10 songs are his, and the rest range from *Tennessee Blues* to *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* and *Satin Doll*.

Half the songs are instrumental and wisely, he doesn't sing *Unchained Melody*. He's still got some chops on guitar and violin and the back-up band is top notch. One wishes that they could have recorded this album when Brown was in his prime.

— By Stuart Adams

Pierce Pettis

Great Big World

Compass Records 4388

Pierce Pettis already has a firm reputation as songwriter and performer on the folk roots circuit in North American and in the UK.

On first listen I was reminded of an acoustic Bruce Springsteen, with a softer edge, or maybe early Lyle Lovett without the intense wit and the surrealism. The material is made up of slower heartfelt singer songwriter fare and some harder country blues influenced songs. The supporting cast is impressive and includes the mighty Danny Thompson on bass and Compass label boss Alison Brown on banjo.

Among the standout tracks is *Alabama 1959*, a song about his family's home-movies in which he is transported back to childhood and relives his memories through the faded but poignant images on display. *Great Big World* is written from a parent's point of view as he tucks his kid into bed at the end of the day. *Anybody's Girl* tells the tale of the desirable woman across the other side of the barroom who is spite of her apparent availability remains out of reach.

What is lacking here for me, however, is something to really reach out a grab me. It's a grower, it's well put together but somehow it falls short of blowing me away.

— By Tim Readman

53

1965
Autumn
2004

Recordings

54

Penguin
Autumn
2004

Recordings

Morgan Davis

Hogtown Years

Morgan Davis

Painkiller

Electro-Fi Records - E-Fi3382

After being based in Toronto for most of his career the Detroit-born blues man relocated to Nova Scotia a few years ago, a move that doesn't seem to have hurt his in career any way. He has recently put out two new albums and led the Maple Blues Awards by taking home the most awards: Male Vocalist of the Year, Songwriter of the Year, Producer of the Year, and Recording of the Year. The center of the attention is *Painkiller*, which also won a Juno for Blues Album of the Year. The album holds together well because of its strong original material and good production values. The top-notch musicians, including Chris Whiteley, Al Lerman and, on a couple of tracks, Colin Linden, allow Davis to lay back and do his thing without having to over-reach for effect. *Hello, Nova Scotia* is a hymn to the singer's new home while *Gettin' Old* is one of several

quirky songs that have helped turn *Painkiller* into something of a turning point in the man's career.

As the title implies, *Hogtown Years* is a career retrospective and, as such, is a less cohesive. It draws mostly from Davis's first two albums, with

his debut from 1982 being especially well represented with five tracks, a young Colin Linden appearing on three of them. His two '90s albums are less well represented with just two tracks each. *Buddy Bolden's Blues*, a demo from 1996, is available for the first time, as is a rendition of *Rambling On My Mind* from 1971.

— By Paul-Emile Comeau

Juan Carranza

Mareas

Oliver Sudden Productions K10-20CD

It's too bad about Juan Carranza's pinched nasal vocal delivery, because he's a competent flamenco guitarist with an equally adept backing band. True, the Montreal-based musician is not breaking any new ground with his brand of music, but the group hums along well enough until his rasping voice wears down the nerves. With text-book flamenco chops, he occasionally, as in the twisting *Asi Me Gusta* — a song that keeps doubling back on itself — offers some surprising turns of phrase, but not often enough to maintain the interest of this listener.

— By Charles Mandel

Bill Colgate

Waiting For Simon

Widow Pook Music

Bill Colgate is a singer-songwriter and professional actor. As might be expected from an actor,

he has a powerful, dramatic voice. The songwriting on *Waiting For Simon* varies. At its best it can encompass an eye for significant detail, as in *I Don't Know A Soul In Toronto Tonight*, and at its worst it has that epic, bombastic quality of Neil Diamond, as on *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (by way of William Shakespeare and Ray Bradbury) and *Rock & Roll Eats Its Young*. The playing by Cam MacInnes on various guitars, David Norris on drums and percussion, and David Woodhead on bass is professional and has some feel but, as a whole, the disc doesn't stand out that much from the hundreds of other singer/songwriters out there.

— By Barry Hammond

Joe Fournier

Whiskey Stars

Junkyard Dog Music - JCD 1052

The most impressive thing about Joe Fournier's new disc, since 2002's *Raw Sugar Shack*, is that he recorded everything himself in Nova Scotia's Eight Track Shack Studios. Guitars, bass, drum loops, everything is Fournier, with the exception of some pedal steel on one track and backing vocals on another. Such multi-instrumental prowess doesn't come easily. There's that, and also his powerful, raw, suggestive voice, which is reminiscent of the early country, rockabilly, and rock and roll singers, whose 45's he collects, and whose hits he used to hear coming through the floor of his room,

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as he was falling asleep, above the beer joint run by his parents when he was growing up. Fournier does classic roots music and he writes it all himself, too, with the exception of a cover of Catherine Irwin and Janet Bean's (the writers for Chicago's alt-country heroes, *Freakwater*) *Picture In My Mind*. Stand-outs are the title cut, *Almost Got It Made*, *Big Mistake*, and the humorous novelty number about a girl: *Two Sandwiches Short (Of a Picnic)*. Nice.

— By Barry Hammond

Reverend Horton Heat

Revival

Yep Roc Records — YEP 2060

While other neo-rockabilly heroes, like Brian Setzer, have branched out into big band and jazz-inflected, Las Vegas style sounds, twenty year veteran Reverend Horton Heat (Jim Heath) has stuck pretty much to the power trio format of guitar (himself), bass (Jimbo Wallace) and drums (Scott Churillo) on his latest disc, using only the addition of piano by Tim Alexander on a single track.

After various previous forays on the Sub Pop, Interscope, and Artemis labels, this fresh outing on Yep Roc should be, like the title, something of a revival for the Reverend. With his ample stock of good-time, fuzz tone guitar riffs, the tattoo-inspired devil and angel cover art, and a bonus three song DVD (which also has some background interviews about the art/music/theatre scene in the Deep Ellum district of Dallas, Texas) included, this is a classy package guaranteed to generate some heat on the dance floor, or at your next party. The good Reverend writes witty, danceable, beer-drinking songs about girls, cars, and phoning in to your boss twisted, instead of sick. Praise the Heat and pass the fruit jar!

— By Barry Hammond

Tim Hus

Alberta Crude

Independent — SBR0003

Taking his cue from the likes of Stompin' Tom Connors, Johnny Cash, and Ian Tyson (whom he mentions in *Hotel & Saloon*), and even Corb Lund, Calgarian Tim Hus has created a niche for himself by writing good narrative songs about Alberta subjects like the oil industry, rodeos, trucking, tractor shows, grain elevators, hockey games, cold winters, droughts, forest fires, saloons, the Klondike gold rush and so on. Hus has a fine ear for details, rhymes, and for stringing words together in a pleasing fashion. His knack is paying off, too. Last year, his song *Man With The Black Hat* was the first track on the tribute to Stompin' Tom album, *Bring Your Own Plywood*. This year he his *Hotel & Saloon* won the Calgary Folk Music Festival Songwriting Contest in the Best Alberta Song category. Ably backed by Rick Preston on lead guitar and Spider Bishop on bass, as well as several others on this disc, Tim Hus is well on his way to becoming an Albertan and Canadian institution himself.

— By Barry Hammond



Kiva

Kiva

Pulse

Yemyss Music — KR002

Formerly of The Wyrd Sisters, and the Crash Test Dummies '94 tour, this is Kiva's second solo disc (the first being 1998's *The Ladder*). Kiva is an harmonic overtone singer (sometimes known as throat singing), where two different pitches are produced simultaneously by a single voice. Shamanic in origin, Kiva has studied this art in Tuva, England and Colorado and has attended several international festivals and symposiums. Incorporating her own innovations to the style, and influenced by such diverse artists as Bulgarian women's choirs, Pink Floyd, Steely Dan, Bobby McFerrin, Sting and Jane Siberry, Kiva has forged a highly individual music with her pop and jazz-influenced keyboard playing, overlaid with third world percussion.

The style is highly personal, yet global in scope and tone. If you think along the vague lines of Loreena McKennitt, Kate Bush, or Lisa Gerrard from the *Gladiator* soundtrack and *Dead Can Dance*, you get the general direction. Unusual and interesting.

— By Barry Hammond

Various Artists

Classic Maritime Music from

Smithsonian Folkways

Smithsonian Folkways SFWC CD 40053

A nautical delight, a maritime feast, a salty dog's idea of heaven and a sailor's dream. Here we have not just sea shanties but also "an ocean of songs from people who have lived and worked on the water". Dave Van Ronk and the Foc'sle Singers make a few appearances, most notably on *Black Ball Line* and *Rio Grande*.

Leadbelly does a great version of *Haul Away Joe* and Ewan McColl Peggy Seeger and A.L. Lloyd get all tussy on *A Hundred Years on the Eastern Shore*.

The package includes extensive liner notes, a

whopping 32 tracks and 68 minutes of music.

It's all a bit much really to be honest. Many of the performances go more for the gusto than any refinement, which, while being idiomatic to the genre, gets a bit exhausting to the land-lubbing listener.

As a historical document it can't be faulted. As source material for those looking for maritime material it is indispensable. As a package it is beautifully constructed. As a CD it's hard to get through all in one go. Those of you who like to dress in Cornish fisherman's smocks and sing your heads off down the pub will love this one as will any fan of music of the sea. Me? I'm feeling just a touch queasy.

— By Tim Readman

Ojos de Brujo

Barí

Exil Musisk — 4276-2

Based in Barcelona, Ojos de Brujo (Wizard Eyes) taps the pulse of the new Spain. The collective of young musicians cleverly grafts elements of hip-hop, funk, salsa, pop, reggae, and dub onto a rootstock of rumba flamenco to create dynamic cross-over hybrids. *Barí*, which is the band's third release, has catapulted it to international fame.

Flamenco guitars, the percussion of cajón (wooden box), palmas (hand-claps) combine with vinyl scratching, programmed beats, funky electric bass and Indian tablas. Most of the time the mix works well but occasionally it becomes too dense and heavy for the songs. The emotional intensity at the heart of flamenco doesn't come across in a barrage of sound, either.

Still, *Barí*, which means 'finding the groove in life' in the Caló (Roma) dialect of Spain, is an attractively energetic and intriguing album, and a must for anyone interested in 21st century European roots music and post-Gipsy Kings flamenco fusion.

— By By Tony Montague

55
PERQUIN
EGGS
Autumn
2004

Recordings

Atomic 7

en Hillbilly Caliente
Mint Records
MRD-078

Entirely instrumental, Atomic 7's sophomore album is comprised of neo-surf, dance music. The secrets of life are not to be found here but there is something quite hypnotic about the arrangements. Their ability to ride a wave of sound for just the about right time, bailing just before it becomes tedious, is indicative of a long appreciation for the seemingly simple arrangements of surf forefathers.

— By Donald Teplyske

Eleni Mandell

Afternoon
Zedtone — Zed- 004

L.A. songstress Eleni Mandell's fifth album *Afternoon* is a smorgasbord that's difficult to classify. It contains a wide variety of genres — from jazz to country to rock. Her major influences include Tom Waits, Tammy Wynette, and punk band X, and she's been compared to

the likes of PJ Harvey, Diana Krall, and Fiona, although I'd say she sounds more like Cowboy Junkie Margo Timmons. Her voice has the kind pretty frailty that is best suited to a soothing lullaby or seductive croon, and to be honest I'd prefer to hear less from her rock persona and more from her breathy chanteuse incarnation. In fact, the rockabilly title track is a real dud because she tries to sing below her range. Ooops. Her band is great — jangly guitars, piano, pedal steel, and organ create nice atmosphere. Her lyrics are as sexy as the cover photo but at the same time as down to earth as any country song-

writer. This is generally a decent album from a woman who clearly loves singing and songwriting and playing guitar. Nothing revolutionary, but it sounds nice, most of the time. Her last album, *Country for True Lovers*, was better because it stuck to a theme. I'd love to hear her make an album of soothing ambient music — it might be better than this jumble.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Omara Portuondo

Flor De Amor
World Circuit/Nonesuch — 2 79811

Omara Portuondo's second solo release, *Flor De Amor*, features wonderfully rich arrangements by Demetrio Muniz, Ale Siqueira & Swami Jr that make use of a string orchestra, a horn section, multiple percussionists and up to ten female back-up singers. The arrangements move easily between Afro Cuban, Brazilian Bossa Nova and Argentinean Tango and always support the natural richness of Portuondo's vocal lines. *Flor De Amor* is a must for fans of the Buena Vista Social Club team and an important recording of the vibrant talent that makes up Cuba/Latin America's deep pool of musicians.

— By Solon McDade

Judy Dinning

Fine Times
Mawson and Whareham Music
MWMCDSP61

Judy Dinning has been around the UK folk scene for years but hasn't released a solo album since 1983. She's been busy enough mind you appearing with The Lucky Bags, Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies, and Real Time as well as being part of an

extensive project of traditional song based in Newcastle upon Tyne — *The Northumbrian Anthology* — a huge collection of songs, a celebration of the music and culture of the North East of England.

This collection arose out of the latter project and features songs of the North East of England including *Water of Tyne*, *Cullercoats Fish Lass*, *Gallowgate Lad*, *Hexhamshire Lass* and *Ne Wark*. Judy co-produced the CD with Pete Scott and the musicians include John Dickinson (slide guitar), Neil Harland (bass) and Tony Davis (piano). Judy is a fine interpreter of this material and all the players are on top of their game. A small quibble for me is the choice of a strong blues feel in the arrangements which doesn't always match well with lyrics sung in strong Geordie dialect. Other than that this will please fans of the traditional music of Northumbria and fans of tasteful bluesy acoustic music.

— By Tim Readman

Runrig

Day of Days
Ridge Records
RR025

Recorded live on the 30th anniversary of this seminal Scottish band's birth at historic Stirling Castle, Runrig now feature Nova Scotia's Bruce Guthro on lead vocals and guitar. While tremendously popular in Europe and have dented the UK top 50 on more than one occasion, they are now a bit more U2 than Old Blind Dogs and a lot more Big Country than Back of the Moon.

There's no question that the fans at the show loved this performance as they sing along, clap, cheer and join in with the big party. If you are already one of the converted then I suspect you'll

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dash out, buy it and play it really loud on your big stereo. As a non-believer I found this CD to be an unrewarding and occasionally irritating listen; heavy on the bombast and low on subtlety. The band are tight and polished and totally professional. How's that for damning with faint praise?

— By Tim Readman

Grada

The Landing Step
Compass Records
7 4382 2

Produced by the excellent Trevor Hutchinson (Lúna, Sharon Shannon, The Waterboys), *The Landing Step* is a blend of Irish folk music, contemporary roots and pop influences. It's also a fusion of original and traditional material combined with contemporary sources. Their Alan Doherty is renowned as lead flautist on the soundtrack to *Lord Of The Ring's*. Anne Marie O'Malley's vocals are one of the joys of this recording especially on the opening track, *Tread Softly*. Greg Johnson's *Isabelle* and Linda and Teddy Thompson's *Dear Mary*.

Their sound is reminiscent of Clannad in places, of Capercaille here and there and very occasionally there's a hint of Flook. I'd like to catch them live to find out more what they are about but in the meantime this will do nicely.

— By Tim Readman

Xoxé Manuel Budiño

Zume De Terra
Collection/Bros Distribution
DO FOL 34

Xoxé Manuel Budiño is a Spanish-Celtic multi-instrumentalist and one of the major exponents of Galician music on the world music scene. The music here reminded me of Laio, Paul Mounsey, Martyn Bennett and The Afro Celts. There's tons of drums and bass groove aided and abetted by samples and loops and lots of virtuoso piping, fiddling and fluting supported by tasteful keyboard pads and fine Spanish guitar accompaniment. The vocals of Uxia Senlle add a sultriness to the proceedings that sits beautifully on top of the music. This is richly detailed stuff but also very accessible and definitely aimed (thank god) at a younger, more hip market. Fans of Shooglenifty and Fiamma Fumana and Laio will love it. And so do I. If only I could have understood the Spanish sleeve notes I could have told you more. A fascinating listen.

— By Tim Readman

Jerry Kosak

Sounds Like This
(Independent)

Somewhere in the ocean of fingerstyle guitar music is a tropical island or two. On one such particular paradise and beneath the shade of the rosewood, Koa, spruce and mahogany trees lounge Bob Brozman, Don Ross, Leo Kottke, Tommy Emmanuel, Martin Simpson and Tony McManus.

These guys are all sipping coconut daiquiris and proposing toasts to the many legendary spirits of fingerstyle guitar from Robert Johnson, to Michael Hedges and Chet Atkins from whom they have inherited this archipelago.

By the sounds of Jerry Kosak's *Sounds Like This* he has been spending some time secretly paddling his ocean worthy Martin OM-42 up to this acoustic atoll and imbibing the music and mirth of these guitar castaways ... or more appropriately, untouchedables.

Breezy tricone boomchicks, Broonzy filled jugs, crescent moon evoking nocturnes and crystal chromatic cascades all flow by with the occasional accordion oom-pah to keep the campfire coals aglowing. Jerry is having plenty of fun on this fingerstyle cruise and has left a warm spot on the driftwood for us to relax and enjoy his agile and effortless guitar playing.

(www.jerrykosak.com)

— By David MacDonald

Rod Piazza & The Mighty Flyers

Keepin' It Real
Blind Pig— BPCD 5088

Rod & Honey Piazza and their Mighty Flyers have been adding authenticity to their West Coast sound for many a mile. Road-tested and ready-to-rip, Piazza seems recharged with this first Blind Pig release and the next 70 minutes serve up some of the best one-take sound on record. Carvajal's vocals compliment Piazza's warmer tenor on two tracks while his guitar adds the requisite Flyer scorch in tasteful measure. *Buzzin'* is an Olympic-grade, 10-minute sweatfest with a band that buries the needle. Likewise, *Devil's Foot* and *West Coast Midnight Blues* set the standard for how the blues should be played. The band photo on the back says it all. They're keepin' it real... real good!

— Eric Thom

Sean Doyle

The Light and the Half-Light
Compass — 4387

Brilliant ex-Solas guitarist-record producer John Doyle introduces us to one of his main musical inspirations: his Dad. This is Sean's debut album. His singing is unadorned and natural. What it lacks in professional polish it makes up for in feel and authenticity. The backing is pretty special too. Obviously the guitar playing is excellent and there are lovely contributions from Liz Carroll, John Williams, Dirk Powell, Emer Mayock, John Hermann, Rayna Gellert, Kieran O'Hare and Duncan Wickel.

My current favourites are *Let Mr. McGuire Sit Down* with its witty chorus, *The Hawk and the Crow*, which relates a conversation between the birds about courting and an alternative version of an old favourite which survived a mauling by Van Morrison, *The Flower of the County Down*.

Fans of Irish song should grab a copy of this recording with its fine instrumental playing and rare and charming singing. Good work Dad!

— By Tim Readman

Triakel

Songs from 63° N
Northside — NSD6081

The third outing from Triakel finds the acoustic trio still based in their somber Swedish mood, but also peeking above the parapets at times to let in some light. The mix of harmonium, fiddle, and voice remains as inventive and enticing as ever, but the slightly broader scope of the material serves them well. In addition to the usual dark bal-



Jerry Kosak

lads, there are psalms – the connection between religious and folk music is strong throughout the Nordic countries – along with some newer compositions and a few bawdy songs. Considering the lineup, you'd expect the arrangements to seem spare, but experience and imagination keep them remarkably full, with Emma Hardelin's seductive voice always front and centre. It's very different from her work with Garmarna, but equally lovely, with the band never filigreed, but to the point in its approach. Kudos for the selection in songs, covering such a broad range, and to Triakel themselves for taking chances. Now fully established, and with a clear identity, they're set to go from being a side project to one of Sweden's leading groups.

– By Chris Nickson

Steve Forbert

Just Like There's Nothin' To It
Koch Records – KOC Cd-9534

With his first studio album since 2000, Steve Forbert chronicles failed romantic relationships (*I Married a Girl*), the death of aspirations (*I Just Work Here*), and the hope-filled *There's Everybody and Then There's You* – a romantic gem.

Forbert has one of the most recognizable voices in music and he uses his raspy voice to its half-spoken best – full of emotion, delicate, and poignant when needed. Like most good songwriters, Mr. Forbert is an eager observer of the human condition and he's armed with a good sense of humour: "I've seen some the best minds of my sub generation marry the same girl twice" But he always approaches people with foibles with kindness and compassion "But in truth I plainly see The problem's" made of people and the people's partly me"

He has assembled band, featuring tasty pedal steel from Dan Dugmore and some lovely back-up from Edie Brickell, complements the spirit of the songs. They settle into a gentle groove and together with Forbert make the whole thing sound smooth and effortless – just like the title of the album says. That's a hard thing to pull off. A lovely effort, then, from Steve Forbert.

– By Iles siemieniuk

As the Crow Flies

Miles to Go
Independent

When I heard As The Crow Flies this summer at the High Country Bluegrass Festival in Invermere, B.C., I thought: a) this is what angels singing at the gates of heaven must sound like, and b) why aren't these people regulars on the Canadian folk festival circuit?

Based in the East Kootenay region of British Columbia, this band has a head-turning sound, beautifully captured here by a brilliant sound engineer, Ben Blomander, who seems to get as good a sound in live settings as he does in the studio. Recorded live off the floor at the Key City Theatre in Cranbrook in a mere two days, *Miles to Go* is quality piece of work in the folk vein with a hint of bluegrass. The original material is delicate and gentle, perhaps a bit too so, but the execution is wonderful. Justifiable musical comparisons have been made to Alison Krauss, the Be Good Tanyas and the Dhuks.

– By Bob Remington

Daby Touré

Diam
Real World – 7087618800 2 1

A former member of Toure Touré, Daby has carved a lovely little niche for himself with this solo debut. A native of Mauritania – although he's resided in other West African countries – he's lived in Paris for a number of years, and the cross-cultural synthesis shows here. While decidedly rooted in Africa, the style of writing is understatedly European, relying heavily on his own acoustic guitar – he plays almost everything on the disc. But while he's an able accompanist, the real glory here is his voice. Warm, almost seductive, it can take off on octave-breaking flights that pull the ear. In some ways he's reminiscent of Baaba Maal, which is no bad thing, and he more than does justice to his often inspired writing. Yes, there's a sheen to the production on the record, but for once that's not a bad thing, and it's never overdone. Instead, it seems to lend an intimacy, bringing you up close to the voice and the performer. And the end result is someone who might well be able to cross over from the world to the Western market, a star in the making.

– By Chris Nickson

Sean Tyrell

Man For Galway: The Best of Sean Tyrell
Arc Music
EUCD 1859

Traditional singer and multi-instrumentalist, Sean Tyrell, lived and performed in Greenwich Village in the '60s and San Francisco and New Hampshire in the '70s before returning home to Ireland and making his first solo recording in 1996. *Man From Galway* is a compilation of past recordings plus seven previously unreleased tracks.

He is a convincing performer with a rugged but attractive voice and a penchant for all things *au naturel* if this disc is anything to go by. His simple and direct style is effective and grabs attention pretty much right away. He handles vocals, tenor guitar and mando bass and is able supported by a solid group of musicians including Davey Spillane on Irish pipes. Highlights include two poems set to music: James Fitzharris' *Skin the Goat* and W.B. Yeats' *Cap and Bells*. All in all it's a solid disc with no frills and many fine moments that will please fans of Irish song and instrumental music.

– By Tim Readman

Miriam Makeba

Reflections
Heads Up HUCD 3087

It doesn't get any better than this: a groove-fest of Makeba's best-loved hits. *Pata Pata*, with its sunny Calypso lilt is here as is the light pop of the *Click Song*. The Hugh Masekela-penned *African Convention*, with its '70s horn section and determined disco beat, is another stand-out.

In between are some delightfully quirky and schmaltz-packed numbers, such as *I'm in Love with Spring*, with its lush orchestration, and *Comme une Symphonie D'Amour*. Whether producing unabashed pop songs or more challenging jazz compositions, Makeba's silky voice, which

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Mary Ruth Carly
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www.shawnsage.com



can easily take on a raw edge, rides above it all. Without question, as a vocalist, she is up there with any number of jazz singers and this seamlessly produced recording pays her proper tribute.

— By Charles Mandel

Plena Libre

Estamos Gozando!

Times Square Records TSQCD 9039

If you're looking for some rhythmic bounce, stop searching. Three-time Grammy Award nominees Plena Libre merrily tromp along on their latest recording, *Estamos Gozando!* The title means having fun and that pretty much sums up this CD. The band of course is synonymous with the danceable Puerto Rican style known as plena and here they turn it into a driving, hip-swaying experience, the insistent percussion anchoring the group's vocal chanting.

That's not to see these 10 musicians aren't serious about what they do. As light as Plena Libre's music is, it's also very complex, with horns winding in and around the complicated interplay of percussion and voices. While the band tends to favour shorter compositions, on a seven-minute number like *Tributo A Rafael Cortijo Y Su Combo*, it's possible to hear the full sophistication of their arrangements and get caught up in the absolutely infectious rhythms.

— By Charles Mandel

Gerry LeBlanc

Vagabond

Independent — GLCD-03

With apologies to the converted, I love discovering albums of this quality, even near two years after initial release. There is little predictable about *Vagabond* with unexpected drum loops, mouth harp flourishes, and megaphones liberally- and essentially- populating his creations. Most dramatic, perhaps, is the pleasant dirge quality of *Dark Clouds* with its refrain of "let it rain," punctuated by Neil Butler's sitar and didgeridoo, Ken Wilson's banjo, and Holly Groome's djembe contributions. Brilliant.

Themes — human nature, ecology, guns — are handled with a deft hand in a non-didactic manner as LeBlanc reveals his ability to view situations as multi-dimensional.

While *Vagabond* won't changed the world, it is an enjoyable listen. Here's hoping LeBlanc's soon to be released follow-up builds on this momentum.

— By Donald Teplyske

Jason Wilson & Tabarruk

Dread & Blue: A Canadian Suite

Wheel Records — WR006B

At his strongest when crafting lyrical dichotomy, Jason Wilson positions reggae rhythms meshing with brass and piano to support his capable vocals. Featured vocalists- including Juli Genoa, Jackie Richardson, and Roberto Romano- are utilized to good effect, complementing the diverse textures of



Kate Rusby

the album. Covers of Jane Siberry, Oscar Peterson, the Band, and Messenjah songs give further evidence not only of Wilson's upbringing but also of his ability to manipulate and recreate his environment. Less successful are instrumental numbers, such as *The Downview Shockout*, that resemble Tonight Show fadeouts circa 1982.

Thoroughly engaging, this latest project from the prolific Wilson — no mean feat considering the wealth of listening choices available.

— By Donald Teplyske

Dave Kelly

resting my bones

Hypertension

1209 HYP

Brit bluesman Dave Kelly has won five 'Best Acoustic Artist' BBC listeners' polls between 1991 and 1998. *resting my bones* (lower case only) was recorded while on tour in Sweden in 1997 and '99. About half the songs are Kelly's and the other half cover such diverse standards as: *If I Were A Carpenter*; *Dock of the Bay*; and *City of New Orleans*. The musicianship is touring-band-tight and Kelly not only steps out on acoustic, electric and dobro guitars, but his voice is pleasant with a Southern feel. Odd he would wait so long to put this disk out, but the material is well worth distributing. If you're like me, you'll feel a little sheepish for not knowing about this fine British bluesman.

— By Stuart Adams

Joey Wright

Camp

Independent

Deftly handling various duties on mandolin, guitar and bass, Ontario's versatile Joey Wright plays in a number of Toronto-area roots music combos, and often backs his wife Jenny Whiteley. This long-overdue solo album puts the talented Wright out front with an enjoyable recording that showcases his writing and instrumental prowess. It is bluegrass Canadian-style, slightly more progressive than its American counterparts in its willingness to step outside the bounds of traditionalism

with some Celtic, Dawg and old-time influences, and with smoother vocal edges that naturally comes when Canadians tackle this music.

— By Bob Remington

Kate Rusby

Live From Leeds

Compass — 74381

Kate Rusby's fear of flying means she rarely travels outside of Europe. How sad. For those who missed her only trip to Canada in the summer of 2001, this DVD will have to suffice. Of course, it's no substitute for the real thing, but this disc clearly captures the essence of the most celebrated young traditional singer on the British mainland.

A warm, captivating performer with a gorgeously engaging voice (and a great line in deadpan patter), Rusby leisurely works her way through what essentially amounts to the best of her solo recordings. Judiciously filmed and edited, *Live At Leeds* features a video diary, various interviews, band biographies and casual but funny behind the scenes footage, which include cameo appearances from Steve Earle and Ron Sexsmith. There's even a glorious scene of her sitting in a bar singing her heart out to Iris DeMent's *Our Town*.

For all that, it's Rusby's flawless interpretations of Richard Thompson's *Withered And Died*, the traditional, *Canaan's Land* and *Sir Eglamore*, and the show-stopping, *Let Me Be*, that makes this disc such a riveting spectacle worthy of repeated viewing and listening.

As always, she has surrounded herself with a crackerjack band — hubby John McCusker (fiddle, bouzouki and whistles), Andy Cutting (accordion), Ian Carr (guitar) and the mighty Michael McGoldrick on flutes and whistles. And Rusby shows her thanks and respect for their efforts with a set of tunes of their own. While not too many folk singers have made DVDs at this point in time, Kate Rusby's *Live At Leeds* will undoubtedly remain the benchmark for years to come.

— By Roddy Campbell

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PENGUIN
EGGS
Autumn
2004

Recordings



Bamfield's John Vanden

Words and music
by Chris Frye

G C G

I come from the mud and the wind and the wet,

C G C D G

from as far to the west as a man can get. And I worked those wat

C G C G

ers for all my years and I caught my share

C D G

of triumph and tears. Ah the oc-cean's the

Em C D G

source of my hopes and fears. Kept an eye on the

C G C

jigger pole both hand on the gaff, and a smi ley on the

G C D G C

line al ways brought a laugh. she's the prize of the coast big gest of the

C G C

springs we would car - ry her home past Ed - ward

19 D G C G
King. Un - load - ing at the pack - ers and the mon - ey would ring I'm Bam - field's

22 D G chorus D G
John Van - den And you might slip and

25 C D G
stum - ble on the rocks at the shore, and ex - alt in

27 Em C Em G
the blast of the migh - ty wake's roar. But when you stand

29 C D G D G
hum - bled by the oce - an's door, then you'll und - der -

31
stand just who I am Bam - field's John - ny Van - den

Fair weather is a mask that the Devil dons
A disguise for the tempest that's coming on
But looking t'ward the west I can always tell
By the tint of the sky and the strength of the swell
Who's winning today is it heaven or hell

And when unseen arms threw thundering gales
We risked our souls on that telegraph trail
When the listing wrecks needed us the most
We slipped past death on the graveyard coast
But the ocean remembers as we never did boast
I'm Bamfield's John Vanden
Chorus

I've rolled and trolled and my hands were worn
In God's vindictive southeast storms
Heard the hull of the ship as it ripped and groaned
But there is one thrill I have never known
Yes the love of a good woman I could call my own

So your questions of romance don't ask me
I'm the man who wed the Pacific sea
Tempestuous though she may have been
A more faithful two you've never seen
She's kept me wise and fit and lean
I'm Bamfield's John Vanden



At the Vancouver folk festival this past summer, Scottish folk singer Dick Gaughan said that for every thousand songwriters you needed a thousand interpreters. Otherwise, when the writer of the song dies the song dies along with them. Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen interest in folk and roots music by printing score sheets to exemplary character contemporary songs it considers written in a traditional style. The Bills' *Bamfield's Jon Vanden* – written by their guitarist Chris Frye – clearly fits the . . .
erm. . . bill. While sang a cappella on their wonderful new disc *Let 'Em Run* – released by those nice people at Borealis Records – we've included guitar chords for easy accompaniment. Chris very kindly allowed us to reprint *Bamfield's Jon Vanden* here. As always, much thanks to John Minter for transcribing the notes and words.

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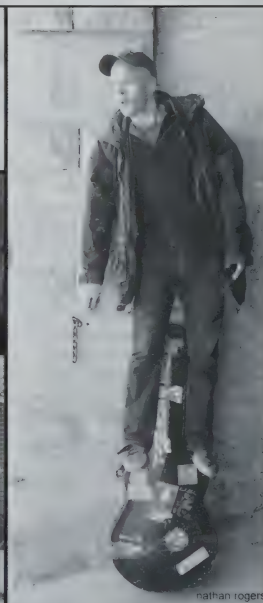
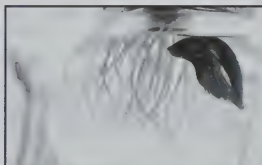
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Photo: By Frank Canyon K & The EPMT

The hordes on the hill don't appear to give a toss about (the weather). . .

Continued from page 31 . .

Weather Cahnnel 0 Folk Festival 1

After an unscheduled detour the wrong way through the Rockies to BC, we head for Edmonton and what we're reliably informed is the greatest event in North America. So West Edmonton Mall it is. Then we go to Gallagher Park for the folk festival...

The storm clouds are gathering as we survey the vast natural amphitheatre and the city of tarps mounting on the hill and the atmosphere is already breathtaking. The 25th anniversary event (did all Canadian folk fests start in 1980?) is opened by the excellent Madagascan Jaobjoby and while there's way too much excitement and exploration to be done to take it all in, people are still talking animatedly about the Jaobjoby dancers four days later.

Genial host Terry Wickham has been glued to the Weather Channel all week and he's worried. After weeks of positive long-term forecasting, the

smart money's on us all getting a thorough drenching tonight and indeed throughout the weekend. The hordes on the hill don't appear to give a toss about that, getting quickly into the groove with gospel/blues icons the Dixie Hummingbirds, originally formed an eye-watering 75 years ago. Their baritone singer and longest-running member Ira Tucker, 80, has been with the band 67 years (and unless Earl Scruggs is lying about his age, he's the oldest performer at Edmonton). But they still put on a lively show and when they burst into *Love Me Like A Rock*, you still feel strangely compelled to leap off the floor and dance like a dervish.

At this early stage of the proceedings I'm not quite prepared for my first encounter with Hawksley Workman. "Rufus Wainwright with testosterone," says my learned friend accurately as his voice soars operatically through an ever-more fraught OTT series of blistering anthems. He's like a folkie version of Queen, absurdly pompous, but exciting too, as he chases around the stage, at the mic one minute, filling in on the drums the next. It's thrillingly frantic and some of the songs wouldn't be out of place on a Broadway stage. He flirts with kitsch and sink, but his salvation is a nice line of self-deprecating humour and the fact that the guy really is an extraordinary singer. Not everyone's glass of ginseng off course and the heated debates about his worth persist long into the night back at the Ramada Hotel - Edmonton Festival HQ.

For Garnet Rogers, this silver jubilee festival is clearly emotional, and his set is liberally littered with memories and anecdotes of that inaugural festival and, of course, his brother Stan. As the torches light up on the hill, all seems set for Garnet to fill Gallagher Park with that big brown bear of a voice and send us home wallowing in misty-eyed nostalgia. Somewhere, somewhere, it falls short, though he does finish - brilliantly - with *Night Drive*, his epic, innovative tribute to Stan.

By the time Rodney Crowell arrives to close the first night, the arena is alive with lightning flashes, the thunderclaps rapidly follow and Terry Wickham's worst fears are being realised. Crowell performs well enough, but people are already fleeing for cover when the heavens really open and Edmonton finishes early for the first time in its history.

By Friday morning, everyone's an expert on the Weather Channel: "five percent chance of rain," they echo like parrots. Still, lots to distract you from the cold in the early evening sessions which for this correspondent bring close encounters with heroic figures like the great Irish piper Paddy Keenan and the glorious one-man orchestra Rory McLeod.

The evening continues with feel-good sets on the main stage from Lucky Dube, Great Big Sea and the man rapidly acquiring mythical status in Canada, Michael Franti. Amazingly, it doesn't rain. We know that because Terry Wickham is grinning a lot and talking very fast.

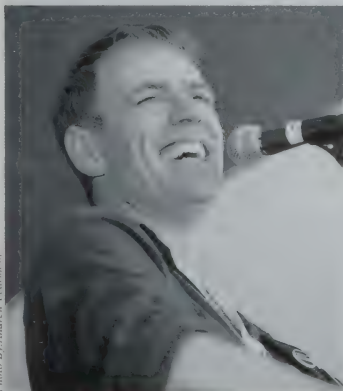
Things don't look too promising the next morning as the Weather Channel informs us there is 100 percent chance of rain, but we stoically gather on the various hills that create such ideal natural amphitheatres for the seven stages and stick pins into the splendid programme to decide which ones to visit. There's a long delay knocking the bluegrass bands into shape, so we catch a rather fine '*Rites Of Passage*' session with Dick Gaughan, Susan Crowe, Laura Smith and the Handsome Family; hear the end of The McDades' concert (with exactly the same reservations as at Canmore) and then enjoy a wondrously informal concert by Martyn Joseph.

It eats into the 2pm mainstage show by Blue Rodeo, but that's okay. After hearing a smattering of dreary soft rock from them I'm searching for Martyn to see if he can't be persuaded to do a couple more encores.

The Saturday night concert stage is memorable. Hans Theesink joins Linda Tillery & the Cultural Heritage Choir for a refreshingly laid-back gospel/blues masterclass, then Earl Scruggs shows that, even at 80, he can still show the youngsters a thing or two about banjo playing. Rae Spoon, for one, is spellbound and despite the unrelenting cheesiness of the band's presentation and the lack of a single word from the grand old man himself, resistance is futile when they burst into *The Ballad Of Jed Clampett* and *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*.

Then comes the best performance of the weekend - in fact of the three Canadian festivals I visit. Natalie Merchant has been a regular visitor to England over the years - both in 10,000 Maniacs and without - and while I'm a longstanding fan, her stage shows have often been ruined by nervousness, indistinct vocals, awkward presentation and frankly embarrassing dancing. I've never seen her perform like this before.

There's an audible gasp as she sings her first note and the full majestic beauty of her voice becomes evident. The gawky kitten of old has been replaced



Martyn Joseph

Photo: By Andrew Leeson

by a sultry, sophisticated, shimmering ti-gress, sensuously prowling the stage, immaculately delivering tracks from her traditional album *The House Carpenter's Daughter* in front of a superbly sensitive acoustic band. The first half hour of her set is impossibly perfect and when she slides into *Which Side Are You On?* – how can a union song be so sexy? – I'm ready to die happy. A little focus is lost as she widens the scope and the band turn on the electrics but looking out up the hill, Natalie Merchant singing in my ear is one of those rare moments in music that make perfect, blissful sense of the world.

It's hard to contemplate anything following that and for all their energy, bonhomie and virtuosity, Four Men And A Dog fail heroically.

Sunday morning and the Weather Channel is predicting a 250 percent chance of rain, but Terry Wickham and his considerable multi-coloured t-shirt army of volunteers are prepared to fight them on the

beaches and we are swiftly scuttling round Gallagher Park in search of the ultimate session. It's not easy; four concentrated days of music and weather forecasts have taken their toll and even the loyal tarps seem to be wilting.

But we do encounter some lively cameos in our travels. Ferron, for one, offering invigoratingly feisty fare for a Sunday morning; Rae Spoon drawing a huge crowd that leaves not an inch of spare ground on the Stage 4 hill and impressing hugely while she's about it; Arlene Bishop backing her colourful, oddball songs with great stage pres-

ence and humour; the very funny Al Simmons emerging as the don of MCs; and Perfect Storm involving their audience in a boisterous interactive demonstration of First Nations music and dance.

Then, an elderly lady with huge hair and a southern drawl called Wanda Jackson gets up on the mainstage to deliver some rather ploddingly quaint old school rockabilly and almost imperceptively we're into the final hurrah.

Some of us – well, me – are mesmerised by the lilting guile of Lhasa, switching languages and cultural borders with unerring grace...though there are yawns from the plebeian quarters. There are some frowns, too, as Ani DiFranco's verbal volleys reverberate around Gallagher Park, but as an ardent longstanding fan hugely disappointed by most of what she's done in the last five years I reckon it's a return to form of sorts.

I suddenly realise that the guy grooving around behind me to Ani is David Byrne. Which is a bit of a shock as he's the next act on. He leaves before the encore to amble on stage half an hour or so later... It's a casual entrance, but he goes straight for the throat with *Road To Nowhere*, in a performance that must rank as the grandest show seen at this or any other folk festival.

A large band – including the spectacular Tosca Strings – plough through a broad array of material from Byrne's solo albums to all the Talking Heads classics to, well, Verdi (a surprisingly impressive *Un Di Felice*) – and I bet that's the first time ol' Giuseppe has been aired at a folk festival too.

The sound is immaculate (you can hear every instrument and there are a lot of them) and the elaborate set-up is an entertainment in itself – Rory McLeod next to me for one watches the whole

thing with eyes on stalks like a kid in a toy store. There are some glorious moments – a radical reworking of *Psycho Killer* is one of them – but somewhere between gawping at the dramatic staging, the lush strings and the engineering miracle, the music seems almost a by-product of the show.

Then suddenly it's all over. Terry Wickham goes on stage to talk about the weather (Weather Channel 0 Edmonton Folk Festival 1), the volunteers with an unbroken 25-year involvement with the fest are paraded on stage and Nathan Rogers is leading the assembled troupe into the farewell *Four Strong Winds*.

It's back to the hotel for a farewell party that goes on for about three weeks and drains the Ramada Hotel of everything remotely alcoholic. It's followed by a morning of bearhugs with new best friends and forlorn attempts to piece together the events of three festivals... the volunteers, the superb organisation, the amazing sound quality (Natalie Merchant says she's never had a sound as good as at Edmonton), overwhelming friendliness... and such a massive diversity of music nobody even questions what the hell folk music is any more. They don't do it like this in England. More's the pity.

A volunteer drives us to the airport with Oh Susanna's band when an Oh Susanna track comes on the radio. The chatter of the bus snaps quiet instantly as we listen and the star of the moment squirms. As we pull into the airport the track finishes and the bus bursts into spontaneous applause.

It rings in my head all the way back to London...



win k.d lang's hymns of the 49th parallel



k.d. lang

of the 49th parallel

Hymns of the 49th parallel brings kathryn dawn lang back to her Canadian roots. On it, she covers songs of her favourite Canadian songwriters. They include Leonard Cohen, Jane Siberry, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Ron Sexsmith and Bruce Cockburn. It's a disc she describes as "My Canadian soundtrack – part of my cultural fabric." And Warner Bros Music Canada has very kindly donated six copies of this double disc for some lucky readers to win. All you have to do is answer the following questions correctly and e-mail your efforts to penguineggs@shaw.ca Please include a name and your postal address so we can pass on your prize.

Q 1: Name the accordionist from Edmonton that worked with both k.d. and Edди Reader?

Q 2: Who produced Shadowland?

Q 3: k.d. used to consider herself the incarnation of whom?

Answers to the Bob Dylan Live 1964 contest are – Q1: Canadee-i-o. Q2: Lord Franklin. Q3: Alias. The winners are Susan Spidle, Lunenburg County, N.S.; Dan Frechette, Pinawa, MB; Cathi Gommeringer, Medicine Hat, AB; Jolynn Hardwick, Kanata, ON; Fred Humphrey, Campden, ON; Leslie Scory, Calgary, AB



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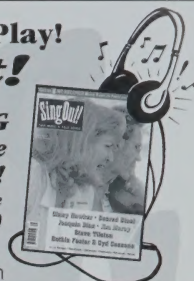
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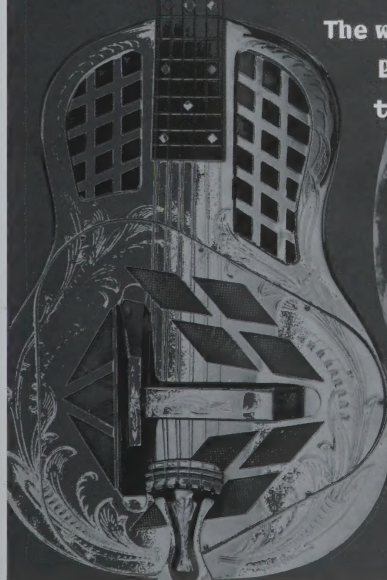
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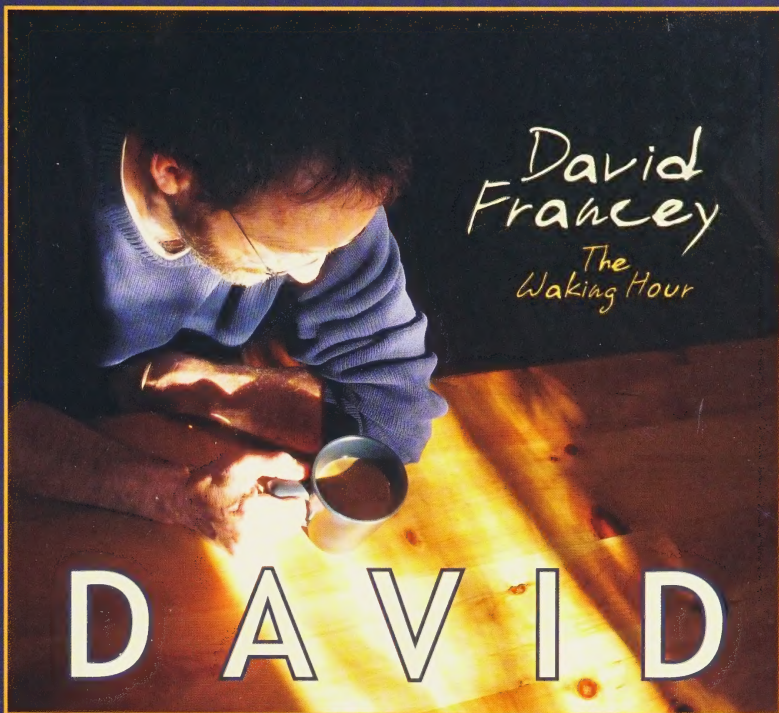
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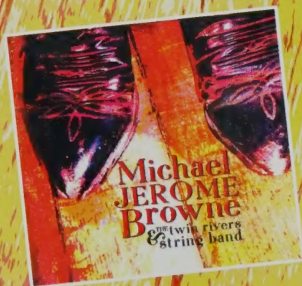
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